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2 different Belles for 'Beauty and the Beast'

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Major oil firms raise prices by 50¢ a liter

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Here's to you, Mrs. Robinson: Bancroft; 73

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World's top badminton players coming for MVP Cup

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The man who blew the whistle on 'jueteng'

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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Senate bomb threat forces evacuation

A BOMB threat sent more than a thousand legislators, employees and guests scampering out of the Senate building shortly before noon yesterday, but no explosive was found and officials said it might have been a hoax.

The military has warned in recent days of a plot to oust President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"No bomb was found. Everything is clear,"

SENATE/ A18

US Embassy on remarks of Señeres: No comment

By Volt Contreras

THE US Embassy yesterday refused to comment on published statements of Roy Señeres, the resigned labor official and administration critic, that Washington would not object to a "changing of the guard" in the Philippines for as long as the transition was

US EMBASSY/ A18

'Jueteng' bagwoman says she paid off Iggy

AS a scandal about the alleged involvement of members of the First Family in jueteng payola rages, President Macapagal-Arroyo strikes a fighting pose while speaking yesterday at the launch of the national pre-school education and supplemental feeding program. EDWIN BACASMAS

'P1-M take per month split with Mikey'

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Michael Lim Ubac

THE FIRST direct statement implicating President Macapagal-Arroyo's family in the raging illegal gambling controversy emerged yesterday in a television news report when a confessed "bag lady" claimed she collected P1 million a month for the Chief Executive's son and brother-in-law.

Reaction from Malacañang was swift. The President ordered the justice department to investigate and file the corresponding charges, saying "nobody in my family or among my kin are above the law."

"I shall stand for justice no matter who gets hurt," she said.

ABS-CBN broadcast an exclusive interview with Sandra Cam, described as the protection money collector in Bicol, on the eve of the resumption of a Senate inquiry into the multibillion-peso "jueteng" racket.

Cam was one of the jueteng payola collectors named by confessed bagman Richard Garcia in his testimony on Tuesday.

She said she started collecting protection money in Bicol in 2004 for Chief Supt. Restituto Mosqueda, then the police regional director, raising P3.5 million each month.

Of this amount, she said P1 million was for the President's son, Rep. Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo of Pampanga, and her brother-in-law, Rep. Ignacio "Iggy" Arroyo of Negros Occidental.

Cam said Mosqueda would ask her to prepare the money in P500 bills, which Mosqueda then would bring to Congress for the two representatives.

On one occasion, she said she herself went to Congress and handed over the money to Ignacio Arroyo, but she only had with her P400,000—or P100,000 short of the P500,000

JUETENG/ A6

Palace behind coup talk —Saycon

By Christian V. Esguerra, Dona Z. Pazzibugan and Luige A. del Puerto

TAKE IT from the administration's usual suspect: There is no destabilization plot against President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"No, no. There is none," Pastor "Boy" Saycon, secretary general of the Council on Philippine Affairs (Copa), said yesterday, adding that the supposed new plot to overthrow Ms Arroyo was just Malacañang's way of "cushioning" the impact of the scandals now hounding her.

He also said there was no ongoing recruitment within the ranks of the military and police for another coup attempt, as earlier claimed by their respective leaders.

"I'm not aware of any plot," he told the INQUIRER. "For sure, there are soldiers griping because of everything that is happening now. But I don't think mere griping should be seen as destabilization."

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita was quick to dismiss Saycon's allegation that Malacañang had triggered the destabilization talk in order to cover up the "jueteng" scandal, among others.

"There's no such plot. We're just addressing the issues as they come," Ermita said by phone.

Saycon's allegation is just his "theory," Ermita said, adding: "And his theory is not true."

But plot or not, Philippine National Police Director General Arturo Lomibao warned the PNP's more than 150,000 men and women against "peddlers of destabilization" and ordered them to "take action" against those who would try to recruit them.

In what seemed like a pep talk, Lomibao said he believed that the PNP could "hurdle the current challenges" it was facing. "Let us continue to serve our God, our country and our countrymen under the [guidance] of our President," he said.

The chiefs of the three major

PALACE/ A8

Isafp chief axed amid wiretapping row

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Margaux C. Ortiz

BRIG. Gen. Marlou Quevedo has been replaced as chief of the Intelligence Services of the Armed Forces (Isafp) in the midst of revelations a telephone conversation of President Macapagal-Arroyo had been tapped and doctored as part of an opposition plot to destabilize the administration.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita told reporters that Commodore Leonardo Calderon would take command of Isafp sometime this month.

"I wouldn't say that," Ermita said when asked if Quevedo was replaced because of the wiretapping controversy that is being investigated by the National Bureau of Investigation.

The announcement came just hours after the Armed Forces denied news reports that Quevedo had been sacked. News reports said Quevedo had been blamed for leaking the alleged wiretaps.

AFP spokesperson Lt. Col. Buenaventura Pascual had told reporters that Quevedo remained Isafp chief.

The executive secretary earlier told reporters that despite the breach of security, the Presidential Security Group (PSG) would not be reshuffled and that the PSG only received a tap on the wrist.

"I told the PSG, let's just investigate, let's look at the flaws and see how we can prevent it from happening," Ermita said.

At the NBI yesterday, Edgar Rubado, a former administration political adviser, told reporters that the voice of the man in the hacked telephone conversation sounded like his, but he stopped short of confirming allegations that he was involved in the pur-

ISAFP/ A8

Lack of credibility GMA's biggest setback, says Cruz

By Christian V. Esguerra, Jolene R. Bulambot and TJ Burgonio

THE BIGGEST setback of the scandal-besieged President Macapagal-Arroyo is her lack of credibility, Archbishop Oscar Cruz said yesterday.

"It's a very difficult enemy to conquer when the people don't believe you anymore," the Lingayen-Dagupan prelate told the INQUIRER.

He said the administration was "now unstable" in the wake of the "jueteng" scandal and the tape of an alleged conversation suggesting that Ms Arroyo had rigged the result of the 2004 presidential election.

Msgr. Achilles Dakay, media liaison officer of the Archdiocese of Cebu, said many in the Catholic Church favored the filing of an impeachment complaint against the President rather than calling for her resignation.

Dakay said the scandals swirling around the President could lead to her impeachment. He said the Catholic Church would welcome such a development "as long as there is due process."

"It's easy to resign, but what should be done is to institute an action, [and then] follow the process," he said.

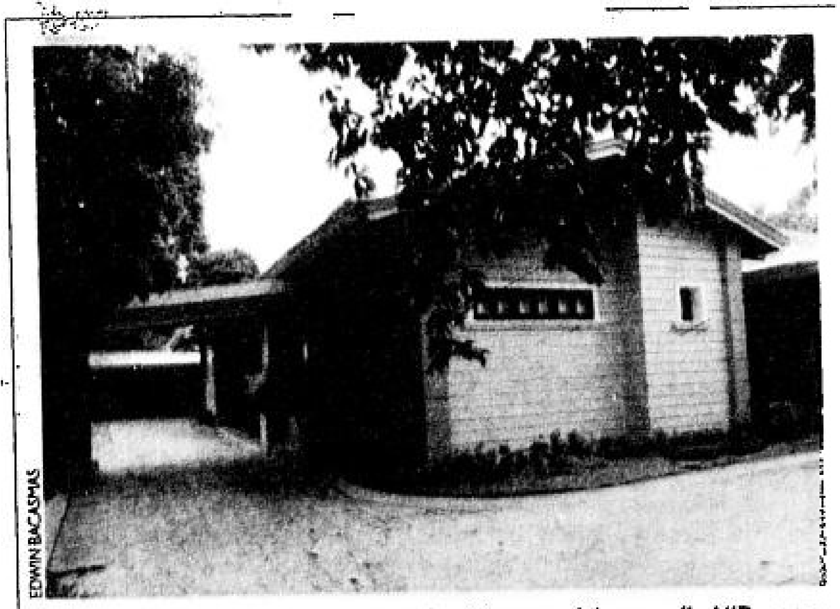
Dakay said the process of impeachment would not only allow both the public and the legislature to examine the veracity of the allegations raised against the President but also give her the opportunity to defend herself.

He said the Church was saddened about the state of the country and was in full support of Cruz's antijueteng crusade.

He said the Senate inquiry into jueteng should continue so that the truth would come out.

Other prominent members of the clergy had earlier expressed

LACK/ A8



EDWIN BACASMAS

UNCOLLECTED fallen leaves litter the driveway of the so-called "Boracay house" of deposed President Joseph Estrada in New Manila, Quezon City.

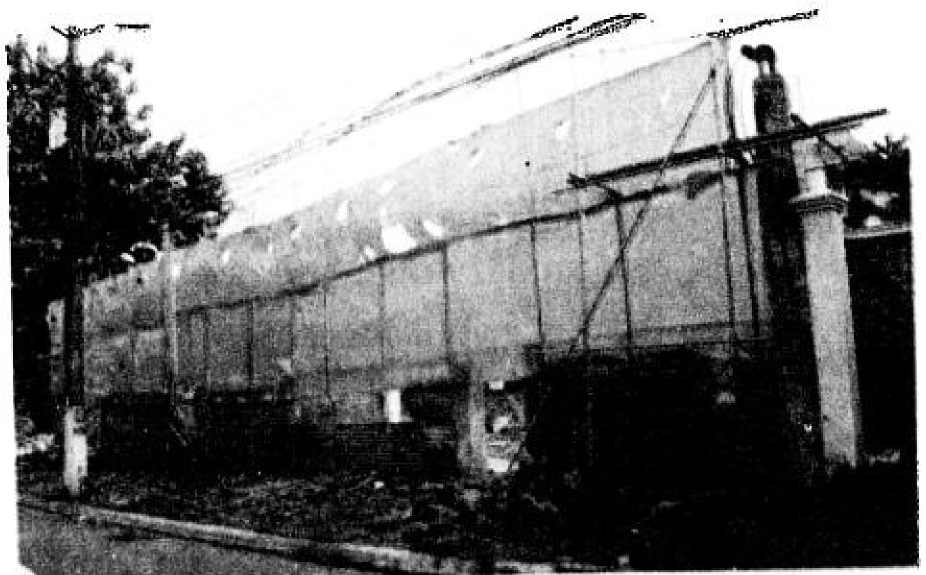
HINDI NAMAN PALA "FIT FOR A KING"!

Mikey says La Vista house just 'modest'

By Michael Lim Ubac

JUST A modest house—but only if you compare it to the "Boracay" mansion allegedly owned by ousted President Joseph Estrada.

MIKEY SAYS/ A6



A PLASTIC canvas shields from view a house registered in the name of Pampanga Rep. Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo on 13 Badjao St., La Vista subdivision in Quezon City. ERIK ARAZAS

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Luzon and Western Visayas will have occasional rains becoming frequent over Western Luzon. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers and thunderstorms.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY CYRIL L. BONABENTE, PDI RESEARCH/06/09/05

Metro Manila	Rains	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Rains	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Rains	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Partly Cloudy

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GMA urged: 'Save my son'

By Philip C. Tubeza

THIS was the plea to President Macapagal-Arroyo of Filipina Cortez, mother of 39-year-old overseas Filipino worker Rey Cortez who was sentenced to die by beheading in Saudi Arabia on May 30.

"I am calling on our government, especially on President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, to please don't allow my son to be beheaded for [something] he did not intend to do," Filipina said in Filipino during a press conference in Congress.

"Is it not enough that he had been jailed for a long time?" she added.

Rey, a welder at the Al-Allah Car Workshop in Riyadh's Sinaya District, is facing execution for killing a Pakistani driver, allegedly in self-defense, in 2002.

On Dec. 22, 2003, the Riyadh Grand Court found Rey guilty of murder and sentenced him to 15 years in prison and 1,000 lashes. The blood money was set at 100,000 Saudi Riyal.

His jail time was, however, reduced to 10 years on Nov. 27, 2004 when he appealed the sentence to the Riyadh Appellate Court.

But last month, the victim's brother rejected the blood money.

Under the Shariah law, as regards to private right, the victim's family has the option of pardoning the accused and accepting the blood money. In such cases, the accused is released.

But with the rejection of the blood money, the Riyadh Grand Court sentenced Rey to death.

Filipina and three of Rey's six children—Alfie, 18, and 12-year-old twins Allen and Allan—were joined by Representatives Francis "Chiz" Escudero, Darlene Antonino-Custodio, Joel Virador, and Joel Villanueva in urging the government to save the OFW's life.

"The cards to save my son's life are in your hands, President Arroyo. I hope that you would act to save my son from death so that he could go home," Rey's mother said.

"My father was good to us. He did everything so we could live," Alfie said.

Migrante International, a pressure group for OFWs, and the lawmakers urged the President to exhaust all "possible diplomatic means" to secure Rey's release.

"Let us not allow a repeat of the beheading of four OFWs in Saudi Arabia last March 14, wherein Sergio Aldana, Miguel Fernandez Jr., Wilfredo Bautista, and Antonio Alvesa were executed almost 10 years after Flor Contemplacion was hanged in Singapore," they said in a joint statement.

They appealed to Ms Arroyo to "exert her influence" and talk to Pakistani President Pervez Musharaf and Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

"Madam President, we appeal to you to listen with compassion to Rey's wife, children, mother and other relatives. Their stories and appeal echo throughout our land and are mirrored in the lives of countless other OFWs forced overseas in order to improve their family's lives," they added.

MODENA with newspaper containing his "undiplomatic" remarks. ROGER MARGALLO

COPW MESSAGE PART 4
TO CAP MANAGEMENT AND CAP PLAN HOLDERS

It was in the February 9th Media Forum where College Assurance Plan (CAP) Management welcomed the efforts of the COPW and Party-list Rep. Etta Rosales in clarifying the issues on CAP.

The COPW stated that for CAP to regain its credibility with its Plan Holders, it must agree to full disclosure and transparency on its liquidity, to which CAP Management agreed.

We met with Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Chairperson Fe Barin last June 3, 2005, for an update on the payment of the overdue tuition fees advanced by the parents or the schools. Based on our agreement, we will meet with the CAP officials to seek CATEGORICAL and CONCRETE answers to the following issues:

ISSUE 1: The parents and the schools, who have advanced the payment of the tuition fees, want to find out when they will be paid the advances they have made, as CAP is already delinquent in the payments for four semesters, starting October 2003.

ISSUE 2: The parents want a clear and candid response from CAP whether they have the funds to pay the tuition fees of the more than 700,000 Plan Holders when they fall due, considering they were all open-ended Educational Plans.

ISSUE 3: Since the tuition fees were DEREGULATED in 1990, the increase in tuition fees for non-exclusive schools are as follows:
- 1990-1995 - 275% or about 55% per year
- 1996-2000 - 125% or about 25% per year

ISSUE 4: Since ALL the CAP Plans were open-ended, CAP has to absorb the higher tuition fees since 1990. Because of this, we want CAP's commitment they will disclose to us where CAP will get the funds to ensure that they can pay the tuition fees of all the Plan Holders until they graduate.

ISSUE 5: We want CAP to state the total amount due to CAP Plan Holders who have terminated their contracts and when they will get paid as per the terms and conditions in the contract.

ISSUE 6: We, therefore, are seeking for an explanation as to how fast CAP can build up their much depleted trust fund by liquifying at a discount the MRT dollar-denominated bonds and by disposing the assets in the trust funds to improve their liquidity and an assurance to the Plan Holders that they can pay the tuition fees of the 700,000 Plan Holders when the tuition fees fall due.

CONCLUSION
TO CAP PLAN HOLDERS: Since we will meet with the Senior Management Officials of CAP, we will certainly appreciate your response to this announcement.

We want to thank you, parents, for the thousands of text messages, telephone calls, emails, fax and letters we have received expressing your concerns, frustrations, and anxiety over the unpaid tuition fees of your children.

Rest assured that after our meeting with the Senior Management Officials of CAP, we will keep you informed.

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Envoy admits Nazi quote was undiplomatic

By Nikko Dizon

CONTROVERSIAL Philippine Ambassador to Israel Antonio Modena returned in Manila yesterday, admitting that he made an "undiplomatic" remark against the Israel immigration police by likening them to the Nazis.

Modena, however, said he would continue to seek from Israel fair and humane treatment of some 30,000 Filipino workers, many of them employed as maids and caregivers in the Jewish state.

"I apologized for the use of the words Nazi, Gestapo and racist, but I don't regret accusing the immigration police of maltreatment," Modena told reporters in an impromptu press conference at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

Modena said he was in Manila to meet with local tourism, trade and agriculture officials to discuss with them the "keen interest showed by Israel" in Philippine products, especially virgin coconut oil and other coconut products.

Modena is tentatively scheduled to meet with Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo today.

"I'd imagine my Secretary would also want first hand information about this issue," Modena said.

Modena's "undiplomatic approach" to the issue, however, seemed to have paid off.

"We're now in their (Israeli government's) radar screen," said Modena, a former journalist. "I am happy that now there is recognition of the problem and that the government said they would address it."

The Philippine envoy, who assumed post last year, said he would not withdraw his complaints of maltreatment by immigration police of Filipinos visiting and working in Israel.

He said he was set to meet with Israeli Interior Minister Ophir Paz-Pines when he returns to Jerusalem to discuss with the official the alleged physical and verbal abuses committed by immigration officers.

"Nobody ever has the right to maltreat and abuse Filipinos," Modena said.

Modena showed reporters a copy of the Al-Asharon magazine that made the ambassador's complaints against the Israeli immigration police its cover story in its June 2 issue.

The cover blared his controversial statement: "Immigration police acting like the Nazis." It also had a picture of Modena, with his well-trimmed mustache, striking a debonair pose.

The article drew sharp criticism from Israeli officials who demanded an apology from Modena.

2 Bali bombers sighted in South

By Jim Gomez
Associated Press Writer

TWO suspected Indonesian terrorists blamed for the deadly 2002 Bali bombings are plotting fresh attacks in the southern Philippines, where one was spotted a few days ago, a top security official said yesterday.

The pair are among 40 Indonesian militants from the al-Qaida-linked Jemaah Islamiyah group believed to be in the restive southern Mindanao region for jungle training and plotting attacks with local Muslim insurgents, said deputy national security adviser Virtus Gil.

Their presence reflects the strategic value of Mindanao to al-Qaida's regional terrorist network and provides a major security concern despite a months-long respite from major terror attacks, security analysts said.

The two suspected bombers — Pitono, also known as Dulmatin, and Umar Patek — were believed to have sought refuge in Mindanao to evade a regional manhunt for their alleged involvement in the bombings on Indonesia's Bali resort island that killed 202 people, mostly foreign tourists.

The two stay together most of the time, moving through the mountainous region bordering Maguindanao and Lanao provinces, Gil said.

Dulmatin was monitored in the area last week, and Patek's presence was detected by government intelligence agents about a month ago, Gil said, without elaborating.

Government forces were working with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, a Muslim rebel group engaged in peace talks with the government, to try to capture them, Gil said.

Indonesian authorities also have provided information about the two militants, he said.

Gil said he believed the duo were not just hiding but also were involved in organizing terror training and planning new attacks. They have reportedly met several times with Khaddafy Janjalani, chieftain of the Abu Sayyaf Muslim extremist group, prompting a continuous military manhunt to deter their plans, he said. *AP*

Dirty money monitors tracking cash smuggling in RP, Indonesia

THE FINANCIAL Action Task Force (FATF), the global authority combating money laundering and terrorist financing, will hold talks this week aimed at controlling remittances and cash smuggling in Asian nations such as Indonesia and the Philippines.

The FATF will also consider expanding its membership and review the progress made by Myanmar to combat money laundering, said Alain Damais, the FATF's executive secretary.

"In countries like Indonesia and the Philippines you do have terrorist activities. So that's why there's some specific threat in this region and we need to be able to provide some concrete responses to this threat," Damais told Reuters.

Representatives of the 33 nations and organizations making up the Paris-based FATF will be joined by officials from 28 member countries of the Asia-Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG).

Terrorists increasingly using alternative transfer systems or the smuggling of cash to finance their activities so the monitoring of cash movements of cash at countries' borders must improve, Damais said. *Reuters*

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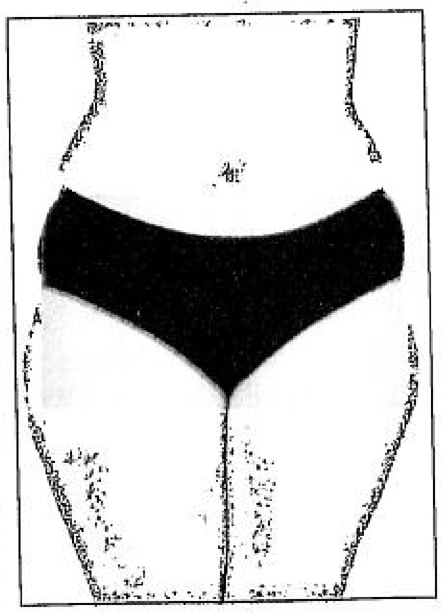

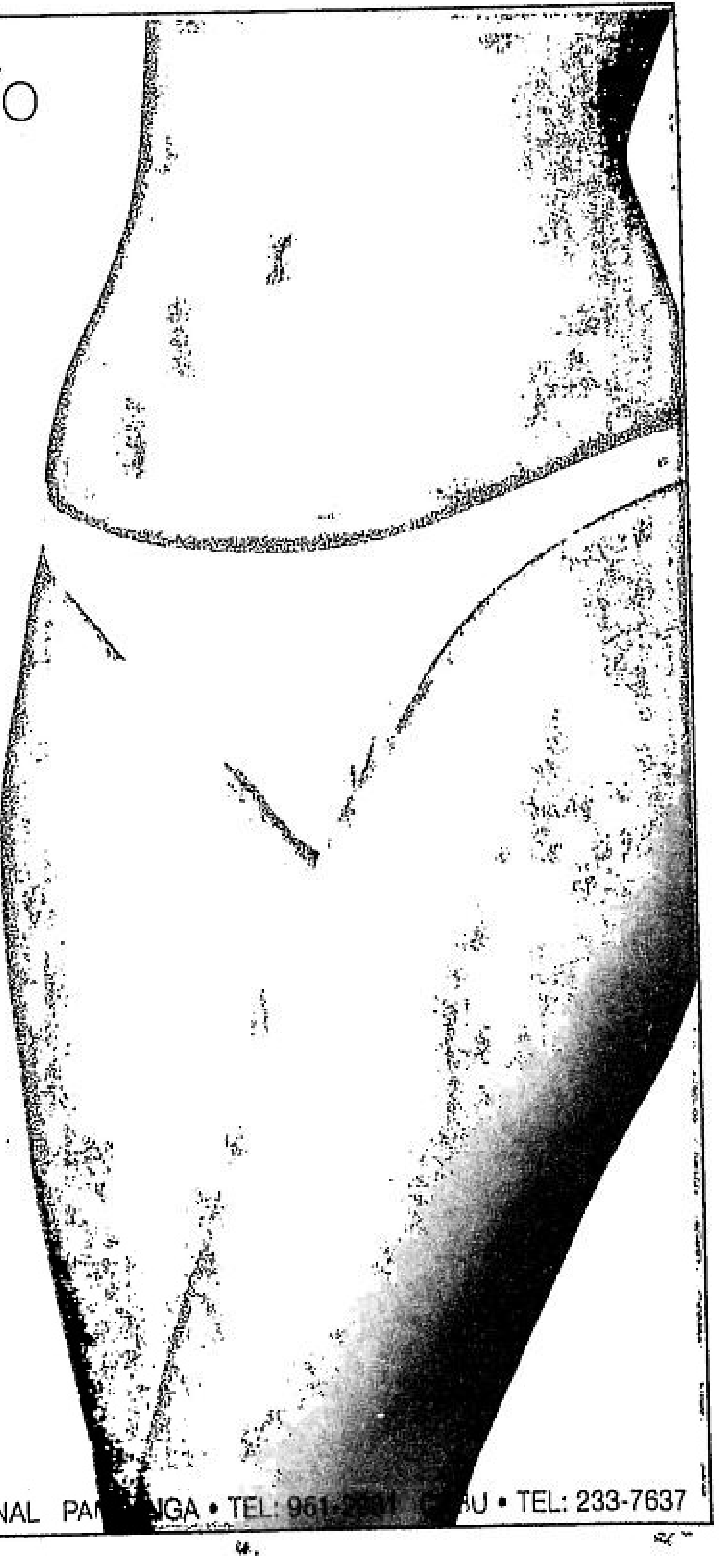

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An Open Letter to President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo

YOU ARE KILLING CARP IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD!

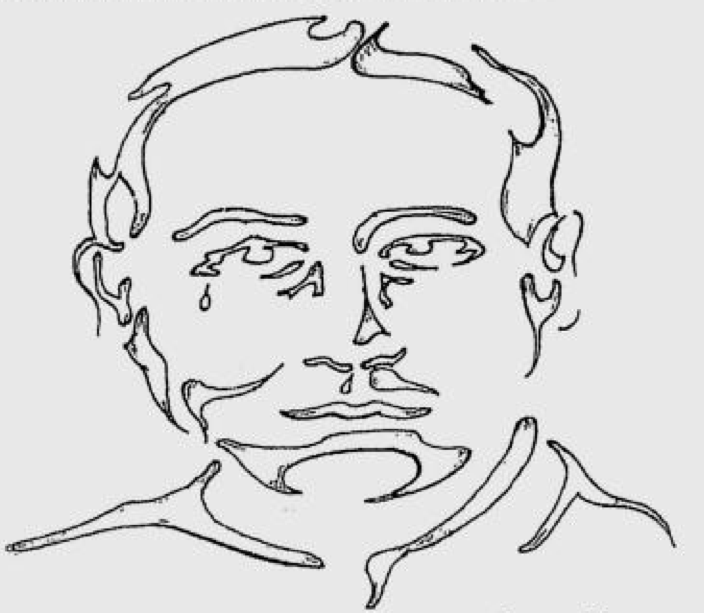
***THIRTY EIGHT (38) YEARS AFTER PRESIDENT DIOSDADO MACAPAGAL** signed into law the Land Reform Code, the people bestowed on you the power to continue your father's "revolution" to emancipate the toiling farmer from slavery, poverty and misery. In harmony with your father's aim to champion land reform, you announced in September 2001 in Digos City that your family would give up your inherited lands to farmers because, in your own words, "my family believes in leadership by example."*

Today, on the eve of the 17th anniversary of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), however, your promise has turned from glimmer to gloom.

Most farmers in the Arroyo haciendas in Negros Occidental, about 1,000 hectares, are still poor and landless. CARP coverage of the lands of your hacendero-husband and his family is not just painstakingly slow, it is also ridden with ploys and perhaps, anomalies to evade the program.

HACIENDA GRANDE: 'CHOP-CHOP' TITLES. In this 197-hectare land in Barangay Robles, La Castellana town and formerly owned by your husband's uncle Antonio Arroyo, 60 farmers remain without Certificates of Landownership Award (CLOA). The landholding was subdivided into 69 titles from 1988 to 1992 and named to 27 corporations, seven individuals, a foundation and a homeowner's association.

The land has been leased to Antonio Trebol since 1994, a clear violation of Section 6 of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law that prohibits lease of CARP lands upon the law's effectivity on June 15, 1988. Supreme Court Justice Hilario Davide on a January 12, 2005 dialogue with Department of Land Reform (DLR) Secretary Rene Villa also said that lease contracts acquired after the implementation of CARP are "null and void."



Diosdado Macapagal: Father of Land Reform

HACIENDA BACAN: STILL UNDER MIKE AND IGGY. The 157-hectare land in Barangay Guintubhan, Isabela town, remains in the hands of your husband and congressman brother-in-law. Latest DLR record says CARP coverage that should have benefited more than 100 farmers is stalled due to Mike's failure to give a letter of intent for Voluntary Offer to Sell (VOS). In 2003 the DLR said the land was registered under the Rivulet Agro-Industrial Corporation, of which Iggy is the president. The same land "was a subject of Certificate of Sale of Delinquent properties wherein Atty. Jose Miguel Arroyo was the purchaser."

HACIENDA ALIPION: LEASED. This 87-hectare land in Barangay Lalagsan, La Castellana town, also owned by Antonio Arroyo, is also leased to Antonio Trebol. Despite tilling the land for decades, 65 farmers here have not yet tasted the freedom from their slave-like bondage to the soil.

FARMERS WHOM HAVE BEEN AWARDED SOME of the Arroyo lands, meanwhile, still reel from abject poverty and debt due to lack of government support services. Barely meeting their survival needs, how do you think could they afford the amortization for the lands that the Arroyos voluntarily offered to sell to them for PhP 190,000 per hectare?

HACIENDAS OLIMBO AND MANOLITA: LANDED BUT POOR FARMERS. In the 118.3-hectare Hacienda Olimbo in Barangay Calapi, Hinigaran town, formerly owned by Mike's uncle Pedro Arroyo, farmers are yet to receive government support services to develop their 67 hectares of the land (the remaining portion was sold to several other owners).

Hacienda Manolita is divided into three landholdings — the 40-hectare Hacienda Manolita-Alaja (former Antonio Arroyo land) and the 91-hectare Hacienda Manolita-JJ (former JJ Agricultural Corporation land, headed by Iggy) both located in Barangay Payao, Binalbagan town, and the 67-hectare Hacienda Manolita in Barangay Camang-Camang, Isabela town, formerly owned by Mike's father and grandfather.

Most if not all farmers here are still poor and hungry because they have not felt your promise in your 2001 SONA: *"Nasa bukid ang mga nakararaming maralita.... mga kababayan kong magsasaka, ang inyong Pangulo mismo ang magbabantay sa kagalingan ninyo."*

PINATAY MO ANG REPORMANG AGRARYO SA LUPAIN NG SARILI MONG PAMILYA! If your father were alive today, how do you think would he judge you? You said in your 2002 SONA, "Indeed, it will be a stern judgment." The stone that your father added to the edifice of building a Strong Republic through land reform is crumbling at your very feet, right in your own backyard.

Your failure in the Arroyo lands reflects your administration's putrid CARP implementation especially in big private agricultural landholdings (PALs) still controlled by defiant landlord clans, some of whom are your husband's relatives — the Lacsons, Aranetas, Lopezes, Montillas, Jalandonis, Cojuangcos, Cuencas, Gustilos, Villlanuevas, Ledesmas, Benedictos, Gonzagas, Lizareses, Yulos, Montelibanos.

Kulelat is the only apt term for your administration's yearly average of land acquisition and distribution (LAD). It was 135,420 hectares under Cory; 314,896 hectares under FVR; 133,355 hectares under Erap. And you, Madame President, 104,364 hectares.

Your administration led a largely non-redistributive CARP. Around 70% of your 2004 accomplishment of 103,681 hectares comprised of PALs under VOS and Voluntary Land Transfer (VLT). VOS is the ploy of landlords and corrupt government officials to profit from CARP by increasing farmland prices. VLT usually leads to fake land transfers. When you do it the voluntary way, you also voluntarily surrender back the rights of farmers to landlords.

Villa's boastful claim that CARP is 82% percent complete is a rotten lie. Many of these accomplishments end only in CLOA generation. Most of us, however, are not physically installed. Villa's claim is either 82% hocus-pocus or that he is 82% accomplished in fooling the toiling masses.

Time is running out, Madame President. We have barely three years to finish LAD. Grandstanding should never be part of a social justice program that aims to rectify historical injustices. If you do it that way, you fool the people and yourself. And no President, especially the daughter of the country's father of land reform, wants to be called a historical buffoon.

ACT NOW! TAKE CHARGE OF THE DLR! DEFEND THE FARMERS!

TASK FORCE MAPALAD

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FARMERS, FARM WORKERS AND INDIVIDUAL ADVOCATES

CAGAYAN VALLEY * NUEVA ECIJA * BATANGAS * ORIENTAL MINDORO * NEGROS OCCIDENTAL
* NEGROS ORIENTAL * ILOILO * DAVAO ORIENTAL

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

Reyes, Defensor make it through CA, finally

By TJ Burgonio

AFTER much delay, the Commission on Appointments confirmed late yesterday afternoon the appointment of Local Government Secretary Angelo Reyes and Environment Secretary Michael Defensor.

Meeting in plenary, the body, chaired by Senate President Franklin Drilon, also approved the promotion of Armed Forces chief of staff Gen. Efren Abu, and Lieutenant Generals Edilberto Adan and Alan Cabalquinto.

The CA committee on defense, which conducted marathon hearings at the Senate from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., also confirmed the promotions of at least 60 other Army, Navy and Air Force officials.

The promotion of Lt. Gen. Emmanuel Teodosio and Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan, who was earlier opposed by party-list organizations and rights groups for his alleged violations of human rights, were deferred.

The commission managed to convene its final plenary, originally scheduled at around 1 p.m., only at around 4 p.m. after several delays. A prank call by a man that a bomb was about to explode in the building at past 11 a.m. further delayed the proceedings.

The "bomb threat" forced the CA, which was then hearing opposition against Abu, and the committees on finance, chaired by Sen. Manuel Villar Jr., and ways and means, chaired by Sen. Ralph Recto, to suspend hearings.

CA hearings resumed at around 1 p.m. While aware that the plenary was set to start at around that time, the lawmakers continued to grill lengthily the generals on controversies, including the construction of a rest house in Boracay.

At one point, Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago blew her top and berated Adan for insinuating that she was virtually encouraging "enemies of the state" to pursue their cause when she delivered a scathing · privilege speech denouncing corruption in the military in October last year. That time, Adan was military spokesperson.

A red-faced Adan later apologized to Santiago. After being appeased by her colleagues, the senator withdrew her opposition to his promotion.

Later at the plenary, the approval of the committee on environment's endorsement of Defensor's confirmation was delayed by a fresh debate among Senators Juan Ponce Enrile, Sergio Osmeña III and Richard Gordon over the body's failure to hear the opposition of bishops and several others.

After Rep. Prospero Pichay complained that this had been tackled during the caucus, the senators yielded, paving the way for Drilon to approve Defensor's confirmation. At this point, the nominees' supporters crowding the gallery at the session erupted into cheers.

Pimentel presses Enrile ouster

By TJ Burgonio

A HEATED debate between members of the minority bloc in the Senate has erupted anew on the Senate floor over the still unresolved move to oust Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile from the Commission on Appointments.

After a two-week-long silence, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. took the floor Wednesday night to demand anew that the chamber act on his May 24 manifestation to replace Enrile in view of his perceived "pro-administration" stance.

"There were some discussions for and against the change. But up to today, there has been no resolution on the matter," Pimentel said.

A fuming Enrile rebuffed this and delivered a lengthy, impassioned lecture on constitutional law, arguing that his membership in the CA was based on his party affiliation as provided for by the Constitution.

After the hour-long debate, Majority Floor Leader Francis Pangilinan ruled that the matter would be referred to the committee on rules, which he himself chairs.

"We will endeavor to resolve the issue at the committee level at the soonest possible time but I doubt if the same can be acted upon before we go on recess considering the numerous legal and factual issues involved in the dispute," he said in a text message.

Pending the resolution by his committee, "it will be status quo," meaning Enrile would continue to sit at the CA, he added. Congress adjourns sine die tomorrow.

On the floor, Pimentel said the majority should act on the minority bloc's move to replace Enrile at the CA as a "mere formality" in the same manner that it had given its stamp of approval to the bloc's nomination of Enrile to the body last year.

"It is a judgment call of the minority that we wish the majority to give its nod pro forma so that the practice and tradition of the Senate in this regard are not unduly transgressed," he said, reading from a prepared statement.

The minority bloc is replacing Enrile with Sen. Jamby Madrigal.

Pimentel stressed that the majority's "pro-forma decision" should not be construed as a right to "veto the designations of the members" of the minority bloc in the powerful body.

He reiterated that their move was based on perceptions that Enrile had "unreasonably blocked" the minority members' right to scrutinize government nominees at the CA hearings.

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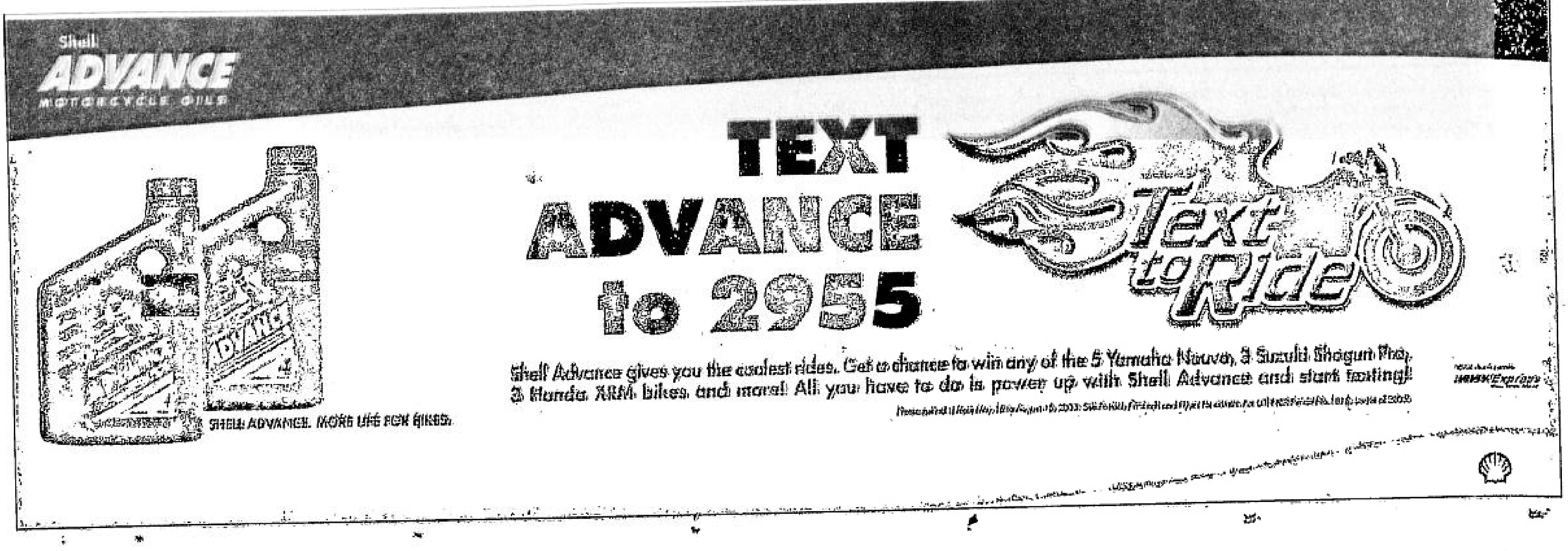
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'Jueteng' bagwoman says she paid off Iggy

From page A1

that she was ordered to turn over on that day. She said collections had fallen short because of a storm that had hit the region.

"*Sagot sa akin, 'Sabihin mo sa amo mo walang bagyo-bagyo sa akin. Ang pinag-usapan, pinag-usapan* (His reply to me was, 'Tell your boss there is no such thing as a storm for me. What's been agreed on should be followed)," Cam quoted the lawmaker as telling her.

Previous testimony

Cam's television statement is the first directly linking the two Arroyo congressmen to the jueteng scandal. Previous testimony before the Senate implicating them and Ms Arroyo's husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo, to the scandal was described by legal experts as "hearsay" at best.

Cam is expected to show up in today's Senate hearing.

Mikey Arroyo said Cam was "another guided missile ... unleashed against myself and my family."

He added: "I expected this because the two witnesses who had earlier sought to drag me into the jueteng controversy have been thoroughly discredited by subsequent testimony. These witnesses have failed to provide any shred of acceptable evidence, and have resorted to hearsay to back their false and malicious allegations."

Ignacio Arroyo said Cam's decision to come out despite reports that she feared for her life was to be expected. "Obviously, she is not out to protect her life, but to get maximum media mileage. The fact that she has presented herself to a television speaks volumes about her motivation, which is black propaganda," he said.

Mikey Arroyo said he expected "the sponsors of the jueteng witnesses" in today's Senate hearings to again try to link him to illegal gambling.

"These malicious allegations are absolutely false. We will disprove them in the proper forum and we are confident that we will be vindicated before our people. If there is something to be happy about, it is that the new accomplice in their mud-slinging exercise today chose to air her accusations outside the halls of the Senate, and without immunity," he said.

Not covered by immunity

He said he prayed that the "malicious persons" behind this smear campaign against the administration—"whether they be irresponsible and malevolent opposition members, or sleazy denizens of the illegal gambling industry who are out to exact vengeance for the all-out antijueteng campaign"—would "see the light."

The Pampanga congressman said he planned to file a libel case against Cam, pointing out that she made a statement on TV and is not covered by an immunity grant by the Senate to antijueteng witnesses.

On Tuesday, Ignacio Arroyo dared Garcia, who had linked him to jueteng operations in Bicol, to present Cam to the Senate.

"I challenge Garcia to produce that Sandra Cam in person so that I can clear my name and show to the people how pathetic a liar he is, or whoever is in cahoots with him. And Garcia had better do it fast because I don't intend to take this sitting down," he said.

Garcia said he had posted Cam in Bicol to collect jueteng payola. INQUIRER sources in Masbate say Cam is a powerful "kingmaker" in the province, having funded the candidacies of several provincial officials in the last three local elections.

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Mikey says La Vista house just 'modest'

From page A1

This was how Pampanga Rep. Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo described the house he was building on No. 13 Badjao St. at the plush La Vista subdivision in Quezon City.

"It's a mere family house," said President Macapagal-Arroyo's eldest son. "It's a modest house but nicely done in terms of architecture and finishing. I'm proud of it."

Representative Arroyo's house created a stir at the Senate "jueteng" hearing on Monday when ex-presidential son Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, who apparently knows a lot about mansions, grilled one of the witnesses about it.

The witness, Rene E. Maglanque, admitted that he was the supervising engineer of Arroyo's house. Nothing earth-shaking came out of Maglanque's testimony.

Even so, the INQUIRER came out with a front-page photo of Arroyo's house in its Wednesday issue.

Not even 10 percent

"It can't even be 10 percent (compared to the opulence and grandeur) of Boracay mansion because, in the first place, it has no swimming pool," Arroyo told the INQUIRER.

He was referring to a controversial palatial home that then President Joseph Estrada reportedly built for former actress Laarni Enriquez and their three children. The mansion, which sits on a 7,000-hectare lot in New Manila, Quezon City, has a wave pool surrounded by white sand hauled directly from Boracay Island in Aklan.

The property was sold for P150 million, at P22,000 per sq.m., by the Madrigal family to Jose Yulo, an adviser of Estrada, in December 1999.

'Everything regular'

Arroyo said his two-story house was being built on a 900-sq.m. property lent to him by his grandmother—the late Lourdes Tuason-Arroyo, mother of First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, who owned many lots in La Vista.

"Representative Arroyo is not hiding anything. Everything is regular," Arroyo's lawyer Grace Maduramente said in a separate interview.

This house was planned even before (last year's May) elections. The Arroyos are not sure if GMA will win, so (Mikey) has to look for a house (outside Malacañang)," Maduramente added.

She said the congressman intended the house for his wife and two children.

Arroyo is married to Angela Montenegro whose father, Herman, is the president of Activated Carbon Industry Inc., a multimillion-dollar company. The Montenegro family is also into shipping and other businesses.

Arroyo said the cost of building the house was pegged at P7 million when construction began in October last year. He said he had already shelled out P8 million as prices of construction materials had gone up.

"The cost is actually going up, and maybe it will be P15 million to P18 million when it's finished this August. But this will include furnishings," said Maduramente.

Rich relatives

She said Arroyo's rich relatives from both sides had promised to shoulder the balance.

Except for an underground garage, the property leaves little space for a front lawn, a typical façade for La Vista houses.

The floor area of the house is 400 sq.m.

A blueprint shows provision for four to five rooms, including two rooms to be constructed on the second floor.

"Room divisions can still change. Right now, it's just a box—nothing inside. It's still a raw finish," said Maduramente.

She said the Arroyo house was "small" compared to her client's "status and family size," as well as the fact that the congressman and his wife had been used to living in big houses.

Correction

A FEATURE story in the Entertainment section, "'Sugo' challenges 'Panday,'" which came out yesterday on Page A2-2, got it wrong when it said "Bulletproof Monk" starred Jackie Chan. It starred Chow Yun Fat.

* * *

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Chavit biographer testifies for defense at Erap trial

THE CO-AUTHOR of Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson's autobiography was yesterday called by defense lawyers to testify at the plunder trial of deposed President Estrada concerning portions of the book relating to the alleged delivery of bribe money to the disgraced leader.

Linda Limpe told the court that she completed Singson's autobiography, titled "9 Lives of Chavit Singson," in November 2003 after 10 interviews, each lasting at least an hour-and-a-half, with the governor and research in a number of periodicals.

She said the resulting manuscript was reviewed and approved by Singson himself.

Defense lawyer Rene Saguisag asked Limpe to quote a portion of the book in which Singson narrated how he and Charlie "Atong" Ang delivered P130 million to Estrada at the latter's No. 1 Polk St. residence.

In it, Singson said he was asked by Ang to wait at the front door of Estrada's house before proceeding inside.

Once inside, Singson learned that Ang gave P70 million to Estrada, P20 million to Estrada's wife, Loi Ejercito and P15 million to Estrada's son, Jinggoy, for a total of P105 million.

Inconsistencies

Saguisag said the narration that Singson provided in his autobiography was full of "inconsistencies."

He noted that in his earlier testimony, Singson claimed that Ang had left him at the corner of Buchanan and Polk streets, not at Estrada's front door, and that the money delivered amounted to P130 million.

Saguisag said that the inspection conducted at the central bank clearly demonstrated that P130 million or P105 million could not have been contained in four small boxes, measuring 12" wide, 10" high and 15" long, allegedly used by Ang in delivering the cash to Estrada.

Saguisag said each box was capable of containing only 20 bundles of cash, with each bundle amounting to P1 million.

If four boxes were indeed used in the delivery, as alleged by the prosecution, then only a total of P80 million was delivered and not P130 million as stated in the complaint sheet, or P105 million as alleged in the book, he said.

But Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio said Limpe's testimony only served to corroborate the prosecution's claim that Estrada received P130 million from Singson.

He said the witness also vouched for the credibility of Singson when she described him as "a man of action who calls a spade a spade."

Villa-Ignacio said that Singson was not aware of how Ang distributed the money for delivery, but as far as "he (Singson) was concerned, P130 million was Estrada's share from the P200 million tobacco excise tax."

Meanwhile, Saguisag asked Singson and members of the press to stop "condemning" the witnesses.

He noted that Singson had called one of the defense witnesses, Sen. Edgardo Angara, a fabricator and a liar when Angara testified that the governor attempted to make Angara intervene with Estrada in Singson's dispute with Ang.

Saguisag, in a two-page motion, said "such wild, irresponsible pronouncements do not enhance the governor's credibility; the prosecution should rein him in and caution him to conceal his boundless animus toward the Estradas."

Nelson T. Flores

Pinoy wounded in Baghdad attack

By Jerome Aning

A FILIPINO worker was among those wounded during a mortar attack on Camp Victory at the Baghdad International Airport in Iraq last May 31, the Department of Labor and Employment yesterday said.

In a belated report, Labor Undersecretary for Employment Manuel Imson said Mark Cullilap has been airlifted to the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany.

Imson, quoting the report of Kuwait-based Philippine labor attache Angelo Jimenez said airlifting Cullilap to Landstuhl indicated that his injury was beyond the capacity of the combat support hospitals in Baghdad.

Landstuhl, located in the German state of Rhineland-Palatinate, is also the site of a big US army base which services both soldiers and civilian contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Jimenez was informed about the incident by Philippine Embassy officer-in-charge Joel Nunag, who went to Camp Victory on June 4.

Filipino eyewitnesses said soldiers aided and lifted Cullilap after the attack and transferred him to neighboring Camp Liberty, from where he, two other wounded Asians and a dead soldier were flown to Germany.

The Philippine consulate in Bonn, Germany, confirmed Cullilap's arrival in Landstuhl also on June 4. He said the medical liaison officer told him the Filipino "seems to be out of danger and we shall await a fuller medical report."

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Palace behind coup talk, says Saycon

From page A1

services of the Armed Forces also pledged loyalty to Ms Arroyo while bolstering AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Efren Abu's claim of a fresh destabilization plot.

The short-lived "Magdalo" mutiny at the Oakwood Premier Ayala Center on July 23, 2003, was led by Army and Navy junior officers.

Of the 184 enlisted personnel who joined the mutiny, about a third belonged to the Army Special Forces, another third to the Marines, and another third to the Navy Special Warfare Group.

Loyalty, commitment

Lt. Gen. Generoso Senga, Vice Adm. Ernesto de Leon and Lt. Gen. Jose Reyes, chiefs of the Army, Navy and Air Force, respectively, came out with separate statements expressing support for the President.

Senga and De Leon are considered top contenders for the post to be vacated by Abu when he retires on June 26.

"As commander of the 75,000-strong Philippine Army, I wish to affirm the loyalty of the officers and men of the Army to the flag, to the Constitution, to our republic and to the Commander in Chief," Senga said in a statement issued Tuesday night.

Senga said soldiers were being targeted for "disinformation and recruitment."

He said there were "continuing intelligence reports of destabilization efforts by certain groups," but assured the public that "your Army will stay as committed as before."

In a statement issued yesterday afternoon, De Leon declared: "We are solidly behind the commander in chief.

"In these trying times, the [20,000-member] Navy is more persistent to prove to the people that it remains true to its oath.

"[It] assures the citizens that all its officers, sailors, marines and special operations personnel are prepared to thwart any attempt to bring down the government."

In his own statement, Reyes "reiterate[d]" the Air Force's "commitment to our Constitution and duly constituted government."

"[In] these times of uncertainty and heightened emotions, we call on our people to be discerning and not be deceived by plots to destabilize our government," added the commander of the 14,000-strong Air Force.

'Defense mechanism'

Saycon said the supposed destabilization plot was a "standard defense mechanism" of the Arroyo administration when "confronted by serious accusations."

"She (Ms Arroyo) is hoping that it would distract the people so they would no longer look at the veracity of the evidence being presented against her," he said.

The President is caught in the middle of the jueteng scandal, with her husband and son alleged to be receiving payoffs from gambling lords. The Palace has denied these allegations.

Claims that the result of last year's presidential election was rigged have also been revived with the release of a taped conversation purportedly between Ms Arroyo and Elections Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano.

'Show of force'

But Saycon said he was not expecting to see a popular uprising against Ms Arroyo.

"I think there would instead be a show of force from the moral and spiritual leaders of the country," he said.

He added that with some Catholic bishops now openly criticizing Ms Arroyo, he expected former President Corazon Aquino to also speak out.

Saycon, once described by Ms Arroyo as a "termite" to her administration, has often been mentioned as part of past destabilization efforts.

Copa, a group of self-appointed analysts of political issues, helped topple President Joseph Estrada and bring Ms Arroyo to power.

But in January 2004, Saycon enraged the President when he helped a group of soldiers called "Kawal" to air their grievances.

All of those soldiers are still in jail, Saycon said.

Ex-Army officers

Lomibao told the INQUIRER in Maasin City of recent attempts to recruit policemen nationwide to join a coup attempt.

"Yes, there were attempts to recruit our men ... The [PNP] is on top of the situation and we won't allow our people to be recruited. Sooner or later, we will know who these [recruiters] are, and we will file cases against them," he said, adding:

"We are still monitoring the groups and individuals who are behind these things."

PNP spokesperson Chief Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil said it had initially been found that the recruiters came from the ranks of retired Army officers.

On the other hand, junior officers who asked not to be named said no one had recruited them or told them of any coup plot.

"It's negative here," a young officer in Metro Manila said when asked if there were recruitment efforts in his area.

"Why? How much are they offering?" he said in jest.

A mid-ranking officer based on the outskirts of the capital said in a text message that he had heard nothing but "rumors."

An intelligence officer said the attempt to recruit officers for destabilization was stronger and more visible immediately after the 2004 elections, when accusations of cheating flew thick and fast.

But the officer said he did not think that the opposition or any other force had the capability to replace the Arroyo administration.

Roll call

In Puerto Princesa City, Western Command chief Vice Adm. Ruben Domingo said in a radio interview that 100-percent of his men in Palawan were in full support of the administration.

Domingo said there was no need for a loyalty check in Palawan because "we are loyal to the Constitution."

"Officers and men of the Western Command are toeing the line. We follow the chain of command," he said.

Chief Supt. Eduardo Gador, director of the Police Regional Office-Central Visayas, also said the police force in the region remained loyal to Ms Arroyo.

He said there was no way his men would join the supposed plot.

A similar expression of loyalty was made by Lt. Col. Jefferson Omandam, spokesperson of the AFP Central Command.

"We are solid, and we are continuously doing our internal security operations," he said.

A text message from Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas, president of the League of Cities of the Philippines, began circulating yesterday, informing his fellow mayors and other local officials about the supposed plot.

The text message, which also called for unity behind the President, was quickly passed around.

It read: "Intel report points to another plot of opposition to begin destabilizing administration via a fabricated tape conversation between the President and a Comelec commissioner plotting election fraud. The same report will claim that they came from US government sources, thereby suggesting US involvement. This will be followed by attempt at people power on or before June 25. Please pass to our supporters." *With reports from Christine O. Avendaño in Manila; Jofelle P. Tesorio, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau; and Jhunnex Napallacan, Jani Arnaiz and Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Lack of credibility GMA's biggest setback, says Cruz

From page A1

dismay over the state of the country.

Caloocan Bishop Deogracias Iñiguez had warned that the situation was now ripe for another people's revolt or a military uprising against the President.

And the signs are everywhere, Archbishop Cruz said yesterday.

Apart from the fresh talk of destabilization and amid the rising costs of basic commodities, protest actions are set on Independence Day and thereafter, he pointed out.

Iñiguez and other senior Church leaders belonging to the Kilusang Makabansang Ekonomiya (KME) will lead a "national day of mourning" on June 11 to urge Ms Arroyo to reassess her "foreign-debt-dependent" economic policy.

The KME is demanding debt repudiation, not the imposition of new tax measures, to jump-start the economy.

In Bacolod City, Church-backed groups are also preparing to hold a "national day of mourning" on June 12 to protest corruption in the government. But they said they would not back any plot to remove the President from office.

Fr. Anecito Buenafe, head of the Diocese of Bacolod Social Action Center, said the protest action planned at the plaza would be held to let Ms Arroyo know that the Negrenses were fed up with the corrupt practices of government officials and the antipoor policies of her administration.

"The protest is being held to call for reforms," he stressed.

Resentment

Cruz said all the issues now being leveled at the President were "not symbols of stability."

"I think all these are not [helping the] people feel at ease with the present situation, and a good number of people see these as coming from the government itself. There is really a good amount of resentment now," he said.

According to Cruz, much of the resentment was fueled by Ms Arroyo's purported failure to deliver on the promises she made during the presidential campaign.

"It is amazing that before the election, everything was OK," he recalled. "But after the election, she said, 'Lo and behold! Surprise! Surprise! We're in a fiscal crisis!' She did not know this before, and she has a PhD in economics!"

But Cruz said he was not giving up on the President.

He said she could turn the tide in her favor by once and for all becoming a "populist figure of leadership."

This means, he said, turning her attention on the poor and ensuring that all government resources were focused on uplifting their condition for the remainder of her term.

'Band-aid solutions'

Cruz also advised the President to abandon "Band-aid" solutions, such as "touching base here and there, appearing at a place, shaking hands, and then leaving with everybody waving at you."

"It is something doable, it is not difficult," he said. "That perception of disbelief can still be conquered. It's not absolute [or] irreversible. And as they say, as one begins to lack credibility, one can also begin to regain it."

To help regain credibility, the President should also prove that she would "let the chips fall where they may" in the ongoing investigation of jueteng, the archbishop said.

He said this would mean not sparing her husband and son, who have been accused of receiving monthly kickbacks in the illegal numbers racket.

But Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said Cruz's perceptions were "against the actual state of things."

'Eroding' support

"The government is stable," Ermita insisted. He also stressed that, for one, there was no disruption in the delivery of basic services.

Still, public support for Ms Arroyo is "eroding" because of the serious allegations against her.

Leaders of the United Opposition (Uno) reached this conclusion after meeting Tuesday night to assess the political situation, according to opposition Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile.

"We all agreed that the political support for the presidency is eroding," Enrile said in an interview, noting that this assessment was partly based on surveys that "political support" for the administration had dropped.

"If that's the case, the support for the administration is no longer coming from the popular support of the people... [but] mainly from the security forces of the country," he said.

But if the "loyalty, obedience and respect of the security forces" are maintained, Enrile said, "the administration has no problem."

Ilocos Norte Rep. Imee Marcos said the supposed taped conversation between Ms Arroyo and Elections Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano and the jueteng scandal were discussed during the Uno meeting.

Marcos, eldest child of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, also said the Uno had decided to join the "national day of mourning" rally organized by the bishops.

Impeachment

The Uno is thinking of filing an impeachment complaint against the President, said House Minority Leader Francis Escudero.

But since Congress will go on recess starting today until July 23, Ms Arroyo has ample time to consolidate her forces in the Senate and the House.

"Uno is considering such a process. But we will not be quick to the draw. We're not too eager to file the complaint just yet because it will not be acted upon by Congress during the recess. We are... studying it carefully," Escudero said.

Opposition leaders said during the Uno meeting that the time was ripe for seeking Ms Arroyo's impeachment on four possible grounds: culpable violation of the Constitution, betrayal of public trust, serious corruption charges and bribery.

But Escudero refused to cite the specific grounds so as not to telegraph the opposition's punches.

He said that while the House committee on justice could conduct hearings during the recess, it could not act on an impeachment complaint without the explicit authorization of the plenary.

Renato Reyes, secretary general of the militant Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, said it would study the Uno's plan to file an impeachment complaint against Ms Arroyo.

"Either [the President] resigns now or face impeachment raps similar to what President Joseph Estrada faced in 2001. She has very little options right now. The public has had enough of lies and deception," Reyes said.

Bayan was one among the groups that signed the impeachment complaint filed against Estrada toward the end of 2000. *With reports from Michael Lim Ubac, Norman Bordadora and Christine O. Avendaño in Manila; Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau*

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Isafp chief axed amid wiretapping row

From page A1

ported Malacañang conspiracy to rig last year's elections.

Ruado, who is now chief of staff of Ms Arroyo's brother-in-law, Rep. Ignacio Arroyo, went to the NBI after he heard a broadcast late Tuesday of a compact disk released by the opposition purportedly containing the wiretap indicating the Chief Executive was pressing for an election victory.

Malacañang has confirmed the woman's voice in the tape is that of Ms Arroyo, but it has refused to name the man on the other end of the line, prompting a frenzy of speculation.

One initial media report said it was Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano, who promptly issued a denial. On Tuesday, Sen. Panfilo Lacson said the male speaker, whom news reports had identified as "Gary," was Ruado, Ms Arroyo's former political aide.

"As I listened carefully, it became clear to me that the voice of 'Gary' sounded very much like my voice," Ruado, accompanied by a lawyer, said at a news conference at the NBI headquarters.

He said that as the President's regional political officer in Southern Tagalog and concurrent head of all her regional political officers, Ms Arroyo and First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo called him up many times on various occasions during the 2004 elections.

"As far as I can recall, the conversations I had with the President and the First Gentleman are normal conversations any political officer would have with his bosses," said Ruado.

He added that as one of Ms Arroyo's longest-serving political officers, "she would normally call me personally regarding various political concerns."

Details in due time

Ruado, however, refused to answer further questions. "We will give you all the details in due time," he said, shaking his head when reporters asked him if his nickname was Gary.

NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco said Ruado's affidavit would greatly help in the agency's investigation.

"We are now preparing a letter addressed to Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye to confirm what he earlier said—that it was the President's voice heard on the tapes—and to inquire about their origin," Wycoco said.

The NBI mounted the inquiry after Malacañang released Monday two CDs containing the alleged wiretaps in a move to preempt an opposition bombshell designed to undermine the administration. Bunye said the CDs had been subsequently edited to show that Ms Arroyo was pressing for a one million vote margin over her rival, the late actor Fernando Poe Jr.

On Tuesday, Alan Paguia, former counsel of deposed President Joseph Estrada, released two CDs which he said contained the original wiretaps. The essential content of the CDs reflected those of Malacañang's. Paguia said he secured the CDs from unnamed sources on May 15. He said the male voice in the critical section of the tapped conversation belonged to Garcillano.

RUADO REM ZAMORA

Attention seeker

The NBI director said he held a staff meeting yesterday to study possible actions against Paguia. "For all we know, *nagpapapansin lang siya* (he is just seeking attention)," Wycoco said.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez yesterday said all those who had copies of the controversial CDs or those broadcasting or publishing them were liable under the Anti-Wire Tapping Act, violation of which is penalized by up to six years' imprisonment. He said both Paguia and Bunye were accountable under this law.

Gonzalez also said that illegal wiretaps could not be used as evidence in impeachment proceedings against the President which the opposition is considering.

Both Malacañang and the opposition have so far refrained from disclosing where they got the tapes or who were behind the wiretapping operation, triggering all sorts of conspiracy theories.

Police and military sources said Philippine intelligence agencies have the capability to hack into telephone conversations.

Because of its highly sophisticated equipment, US involvement in the alleged wiretapping has not been ruled out in the guessing game, despite the US Embassy's persistent denials.

Malacañang critics suggest that Washington is now distancing itself from the Arroyo administration in the midst of a raging illegal gambling controversy that has touched the First Family, the President's record low performance rating and massive corruption in government. *(See story on front page.)*

Jose Concepcion, chair of the National Citizens' Movement for Free Election (Namfrel), told reporters yesterday that Garcillano was not assigned to supervise elections in Mindanao and could not do anything to change the poll results.

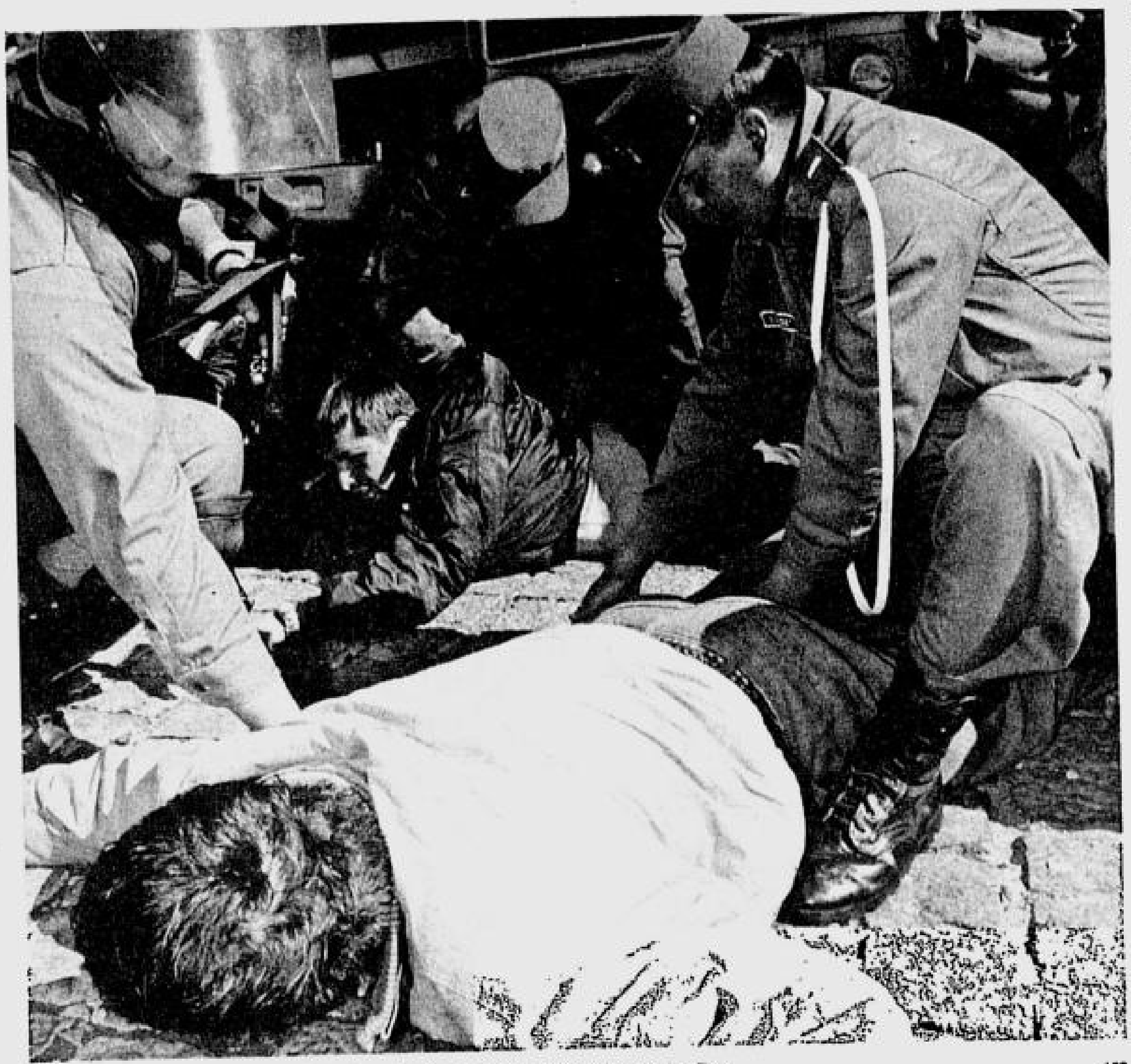
Concepcion declined comment when asked if he thought massive cheating occurred during the balloting.

Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. also said television reports saying he had cleared Garcillano were untrue. He said only a proper investigative body could do this. *With reports from Alcuin Papa, Jerome Aning, Dona Pazzibugan and Armand N. Nocum*

The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Bolivia scrambles to pick new president



RIOT policemen arrest protesters during a demonstration in La Paz. AFP

LA PAZ, Bolivia—Lawmakers scrambled to arrange an emergency session of Congress to fill a power vacuum created by the resignation of President Carlos Mesa, bidding to put an end to violent protests by the country's poor Indian majority intent on wresting power from the wealthy white ruling class.

Mesa, a US-backed free-market supporter, survived only 19 months in office before offering to step down Monday, his government buckling in the face of weeks of street protests by a coalition of Indians, labor union members, farmers and miners.

The resignation—expected to be put to a vote in Congress on Thursday—could ultimately usher in new elections, raising the prospect of Bolivia becoming the seventh Latin American country to move to a leftist government suspicious of US intentions in the region.

The crisis pits Indian and labor groups from the poorer eastern highlands, including La Paz and its impoverished satellite city of El Alto, against ruling blocs from Santa Cruz in the east and the oil-rich gas fields to the south that are pursuing greater autonomy.

Mesa's offer to resign is expected to be accepted by Congress if it can convene an emergency session. Authorities said the session would be held in the historic formal capital of Sucre in southern Bolivia because of security concerns.

Mesa went on national television late Tuesday to urge lawmakers to move quickly to call early elections for president, vice president and other legislative posts, saying it was the only solution to the crisis.

"Let's put an end to this craziness," said Mesa. "The only way to avoid further violence is to hold elections right away."

Despite the resignation offer, opposition leaders have said they will not relent in the daily protests which, coupled with road blockades, have caused shortages of food, gasoline and water in the capital and shut down public transportation and most business activity.

On Tuesday, riot police firing tear gas canisters sent thousands of demonstrators fleeing down the cobblestoned streets of La Paz's old colonial center. Miners in brown hard hats responded by blasting dynamite sticks that sent pigeons fluttering.

Ambulances sped away with the injured and a major public hospital said it had received 12 people. Most had been felled by tear gas and rubber bullets, but the hospital said one miner lost a hand in a dynamite explosion.

A group of helmeted officers dragged miners roughly from the yellow dump trucks they had used to converge on the city, beating some of the protesters as others regrouped amid the biting tear gas that wafted over downtown La Paz for hours.

Army troops took up defensive positions around the Government Palace. Police reported at least 42 arrests by late afternoon, when most of the demonstrators had dispersed. *AP*

Brazilian president vows all-out fight vs corruption

BRASILIA, Brazil—Battered by accusations that his party paid bribes to buy votes in Congress, President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva vowed to fight corruption even if it meant "cutting into our own flesh."

Investors fear the corruption allegations could paralyze Silva's administration. Stocks fell for the second straight day over concerns about political stability in South America's largest country. Brazil's currency, the real, was down again against both the dollar and euro.

Addressing a United Nations forum in Brasilia on Tuesday night, Silva vowed to spare no effort in the fight against corruption.

"We won't protect anyone, we will cut into our own flesh if necessary," Silva told delegates at the opening of the four-day UN Global Forum on Fighting Corruption.

He also declared he had fired the directors of the postal service and the state-run IRB reinsurance company, but stopped short of announcing a wide-ranging anticorruption package as many here had expected.

"This is not the right moment to announce administrative measures," Silva said. But he promised that actions his government was taking would turn corruption into "a sad memory of a past that will not return."

The firings followed the launch of a congressional probe into corruption in the postal service last week, the first major corruption scandal to taint Silva's administration.

That scandal widened Monday, when a senator from the governing coalition said Silva's Workers Party paid monthly bribes to buy votes in Congress.

Silva told the forum that his government was dedicated to investigating all charges and would not oppose a separate congressional probe and was even ready to help it. *AP*

Hunt on for Maoist rebs who killed 21 soldiers

KATMANDU—Soldiers combed jungles of western Nepal on Wednesday in the hunt for communist guerrillas who fled after ambushing an army patrol earlier this week in violence that killed at least 21 combatants, officials said.

Hundreds of soldiers were searching the area around Kailali district, about 550 km west of Katmandu, on foot, in trucks and in helicopters, a senior Army official at a regional command center said.

Troops went to the area after receiving information that hundreds of Maoist rebels were camping there, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The insurgents had ambushed an army patrol on Monday near Shankarpur village, killing at least 13 soldiers and a policeman.

Several rebels were also killed in the ensuing battle, but soldiers recovered only eight rebel bodies, the Army said. More rebels were believed killed but their bodies were taken away by surviving guerrillas, and villagers reported seeing dozens of injured rebels being carried away, the Army said.

The rebels were believed to have been planning a major attack in the area for months. They were chased away during an Army operation in April, but appear to be returning to the area, the senior Army official said.

The guerrillas have stepped up violence since Feb. 1, when King Gyanendra took control of the government and imposed a three-month state of emergency. He said the power grab was necessary to quell the communist insurgency, which has killed more than 11,500 people since 1996.

On Monday the rebels blew apart a passenger bus killing at least 38 people and injuring 71. The bus was crossing a wooden bridge in Nepal's rural south when the explosion threw the vehicle into the air.

Rebel leader Prachanda later said it was a mistake and apologized for the civilian casualties. *AP*

China eyes ban of foreign cartoons

SHANGHAI, China—Tom and Jerry, beware!

China could ban foreign-made cartoons from prime time television once the quantity and quality of domestic cartoons reach a certain level, officials at the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television said Wednesday.

China already limits the ratio of foreign-made cartoons to domestic ones to 4:6, said an official at the agency's cartoon department, who refused to give her name.

"We really need to encourage domestic-made cartoons," said Fu Tiezhen, head of the China Cartoon Arts Committee, an industry group.

"From the mid-80s, a lot of cartoons from America and Japan were imported into China for free or at very little cost. It's a kind of dumping," Fu said.

The popularity of foreign cartoons, widely available both on television and on disk, has long troubled bureaucrats hoping to nurture the domestic industry.

Yet foreign cartoons dubbed into Chinese remain a staple on late afternoon and weekend television.

Fu said he believed that the cartoon industry would best develop through the "market system," but in the meantime some administrative measures might help.

"We should take action to protect our national culture," he said.

Chinese studios have leveraged their low labor costs to gain a growing share of the business of animating cartoons for foreign studios.

Yet they've had little luck building up their own brands. Apart from a handful of traditional tales like "Journey to the West" and a few new ones made with government backing, such as "The Big Headed Boy," there are few locally made selections.

Meanwhile, Disney brand shops have opened up in many cities, and pirated knock-offs of their products are widely available in markets and shops.

Videos of classics like "Alice in Wonderland" and "Tintin" can be bought for only a dollar or two (one or two euros) in shops found on nearly every block. *AP*

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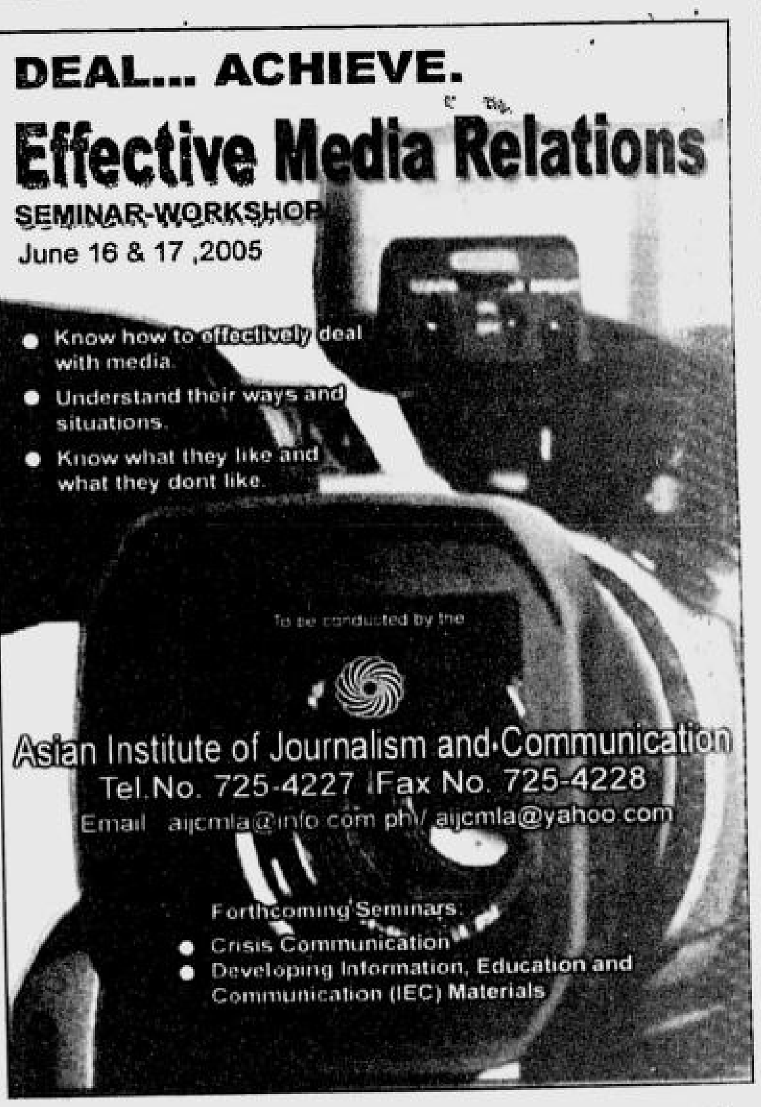

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And here's to you Mrs. Robinson: Anne Bancroft; 73

A SCENE from "The Graduate" for which actress Anne Bancroft (inset) is best remembered. AP

NEW YORK—Anne Bancroft, who won the 1962 best actress Oscar as the teacher of a young Helen Keller in "The Miracle Worker" but achieved greater fame as the seductive Mrs. Robinson in "The Graduate," has died. She was 73.

She died of uterine cancer on Monday at Mount Sinai Hospital, John Barlow, a spokesperson for her husband, Mel Brooks, said Tuesday.

Bancroft was awarded the Tony for creating the role on Broadway of poor-sighted Annie Sullivan, the teacher of the deaf and blind Keller. She repeated her portrayal in the film version.

Yet despite her Academy Award and four other nominations, "The Graduate" overshadowed her other achievements.

Dustin Hoffman delivered the famous line when he realized his girlfriend's mother was coming on to him at her house: "Mrs. Robinson, you're trying to seduce me. Aren't you?"

Bancroft complained to a 2003 interviewer: "I am quite surprised that with all my work, and some of it is very, very good, that nobody talks about 'The Miracle Worker.' We're talking about Mrs. Robinson. I understand the world... I'm just a little dismayed that people aren't beyond it yet."

Mike Nichols, who directed "The Graduate," called Bancroft a masterful performer.

"Her combination of brains, humor, frankness and sense were unlike any other artist," Nichols said in a statement. "Her beauty was constantly shifting with her roles, and because she was a consummate actress she changed radically for every part."

Patty Duke, who played Keller to Bancroft's Sullivan, said "there aren't superlatives enough" to describe what working with Bancroft was like. "On most nights we performed it felt as if we were one," she said.

Bancroft's beginnings in Hollywood were unimpressive. After a series of B pictures, she escaped to Broadway in 1958 and won her first Tony opposite Henry Fonda in "Two for the Seesaw."

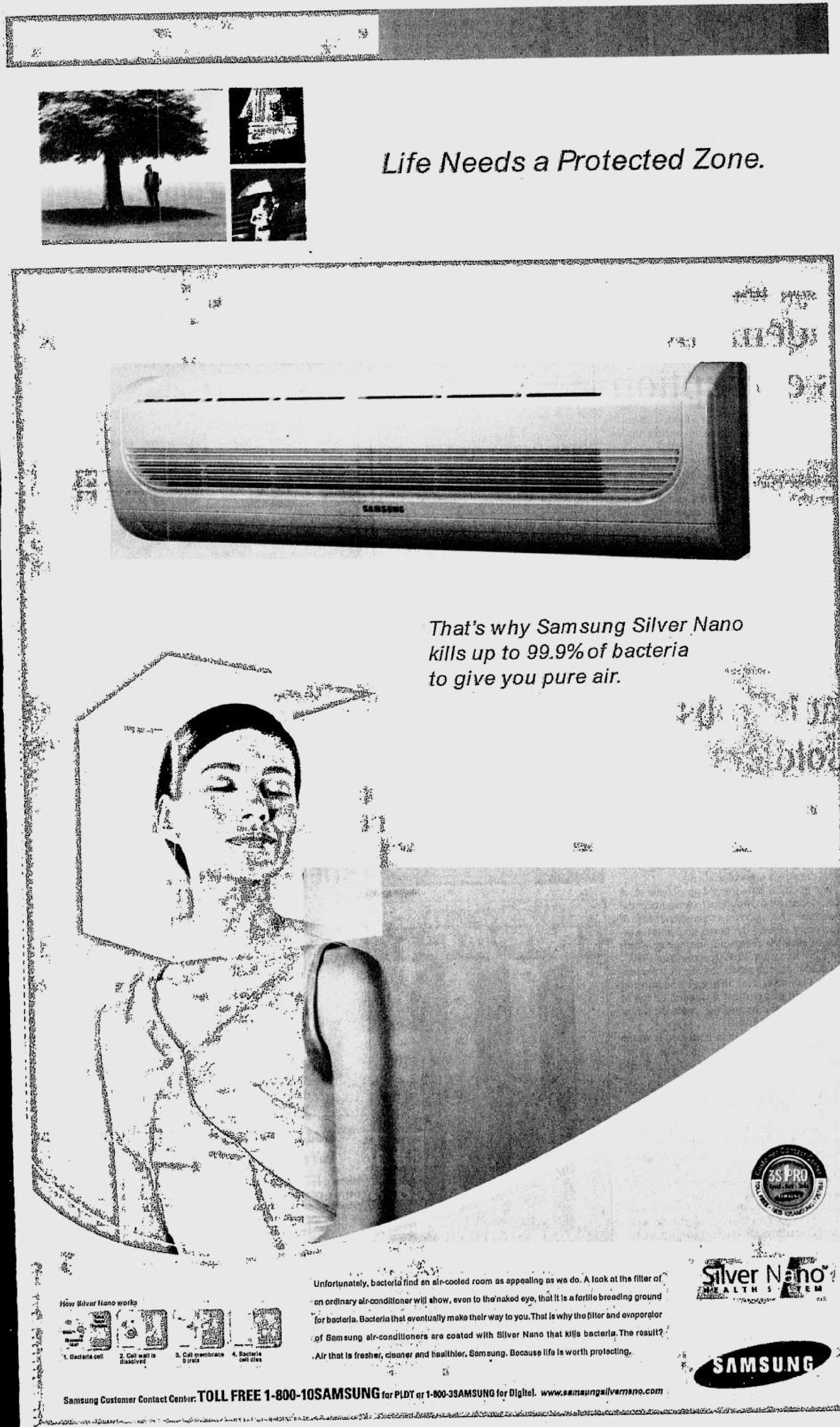
The stage and movie versions of "The Miracle Worker" followed. Her other Academy nominations: "The Pumpkin Eater" (1964); "The Graduate" (1967); "The Turning Point" (1977); "Agnes of God" (1985).

After an unhappy three-year marriage to builder Martin May, Bancroft married comedian-director-producer Brooks in 1964. A son, Maximilian, was born in 1972.

She was born Sept. 17, 1931, in the Bronx to Italian immigrant parents. She recalled scrawling "I want to be an actress" on the back fence of her flat when she was 9. Her father derided her ambitions, saying, "Who are we to dream these dreams?" Her mother was the dreamer, encouraging her daughter to enroll at the American Academy for Dramatic Arts.

Despite all her memorable performances, Bancroft was remembered most for Mrs. Robinson. In 2003 she admitted that nearly everyone discouraged her from undertaking the role "because it was all about sex with a younger man." She viewed the character as having unfulfilled dreams and having been relegated to a conventional life with a conventional husband.

She added: "Film critics said I gave a voice to the fear we all have: that we'll reach a certain point in our lives, look around and realize that all the things we said we'd do and become will never come to be—and that we're ordinary." *AP*



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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, June 9, 2005
10th Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: 2 Cor 3:15-4:1,3-6
Gospel: Matthew 5:20-26

Jesus said to the crowds, "I tell you, then, that if you are not righteous in a much broader way than the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

"You have heard that it was said to our people in the past: Do not commit murder; anyone who does kill will have to face trial. But now I tell you: whoever gets angry with a brother or sister will have to face trial. Whoever insults a brother or sister deserves to be brought before the council; whoever humiliates a brother or sister deserves to be thrown into the fire of hell. So, if you are about to offer your gift at the altar and you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar, go at once and make peace with him, and then come back and offer your gift to God.

"Don't forget this: be reconciled with your opponent quickly when you are together on the way to court. Otherwise he will turn you over to the judge, who will hand you over to the police, who will put you in jail. There you will stay, until you have paid the last penny."

Commentary

Jesus is trying to stretch his followers' minds in imagining other ways to act—deeper into the sense and intent of laws and their practice in creative ways to obey: who, under any and all circumstances, defying old practices always keeping in mind the image of God that is at the root of our obedience and how our God sees, knows and treats all of us. So we kill each other long before we actually pull a trigger or stab one, with our tongues, plotting, thinking about revenge and stirring up and keeping alive grievances, fantasizing ways to humiliate another. And Jesus is clear: among his own—we are not allowed to let this happen, or escalate, but stop the offender immediately: no humiliating, no shaming, no insulting, name-calling, dehumanizing others. We are not even allowed to come to liturgy without first making sure that we are at peace with others—all others. (What would this mean to a nation at war?) We must seize upon the first failure and not allow it to become public, and involve more and more people. Otherwise, one day we will know justice ourselves from God.

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

CIVIL LAW (SPECIAL CONTRACTS: SALES)—Double sales—Article 1544 of the Civil Code contemplates a case of double or multiple sales by a single vendor. More specifically, it covers a situation where a single vendor sold one and the same immovable property to two or more buyers. According to a noted civil law author, it is necessary that the conveyance must have been made by a party who has an existing right in the thing and the power to dispose of it. It cannot be invoked where the two different contracts of sale are made by two different persons, one of them not being the owner of the property sold. And even if the sale was made by the same person, if the second sale was made when such person was no longer the owner of the property, because it had been acquired by the first purchaser in full dominion, the second purchaser cannot acquire any right. (Citations omitted.) (Justice Tinga, Consolidated Rural Bank (Cagayan Valley), Inc. v. Court of Appeals, G.R. No. 132161, January 17, 2005) BY R.B. VERA

US claims North Korea has pledged to return to nuke talks

SEOUL—US officials claimed they had a new commitment from North Korea to return to six-party nuclear talks and China said they'd likely resume in weeks. But the North stayed mum on any pledge Wednesday, and South Korea and Japan reacted with caution because no firm date was set.

North Korea brought no clarity to the issue—mentioning in a statement Wednesday that it held meetings with US officials, but giving no indication of a renewed commitment to return to talks.

Instead, the North again lashed out at Washington for reported comments by a defense official—in a position later withdrawn by top US officials—that time was running out before the United States would seek to refer Pyongyang to the United Nations for sanctions.

"To severely slander and irritate a dialogue partner at a time when contacts between North Korea and the United States are being made to resume the six-nation talks is something only a fool can say, with no knowledge of politics," an unnamed North Korean foreign ministry spokesperson said.

The spokesperson also called US Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld "an imbecile, quite ignorant of diplomacy, dialogue and negotiation," according to the North's state-run Korean Central News Agency.

"He seems to know nothing but a war," the spokesperson said. "So, he'd better go to Iraq with a rifle in hand if he has nothing to do."

The six-party negotiations—in which the United States, China, Japan, Russia and South Korea are pushing for North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons program—have been dormant for nearly a year, following three rounds in Beijing that failed to lead to any breakthroughs. *AP*

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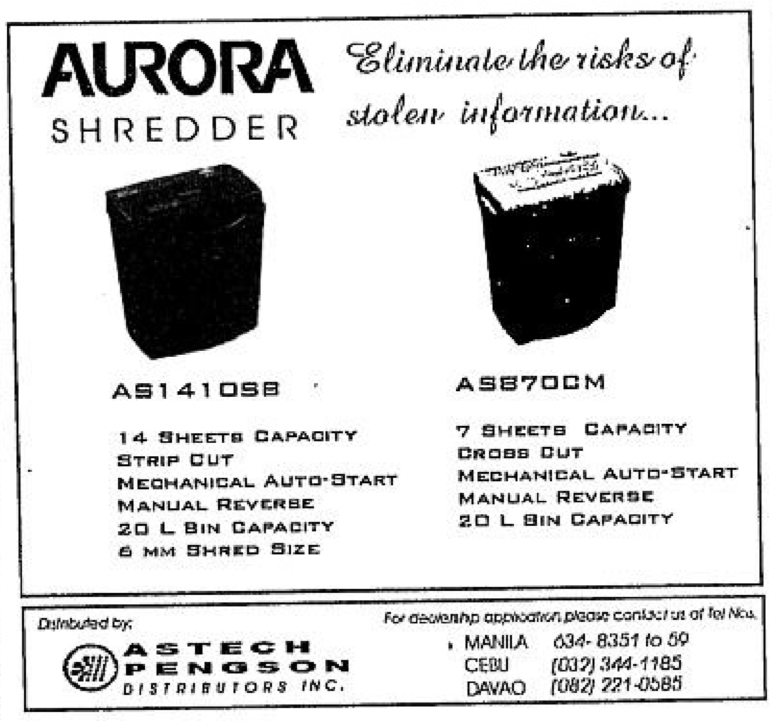
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Who did it?

EDITORIAL

AS if the revelations about the involvement in *jueteng* of some prominent politicians and top police officials were not shocking enough, here comes this story about the alleged attempt of President Macapagal-Arroyo to rig the 2004 presidential elections. Evidence of this is supposed to be a taped conversation between Ms Arroyo and Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano, where the former expresses concern that her lead over her closest rival, actor Fernando Poe Jr., would be reduced to less than a million votes.

Garcillano has denied that he was the one caught in the recording, talking to the President. Malacañang, which released Monday copies of two compact discs to the media, confirmed that the woman speaking was the President but denied she was talking to the Comelec official. Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye expressed outrage over the wiretapping of the President's private conversation but said the tape had been spliced to put her in a compromising position. He said this was the "latest plot, the most devious and desperate," of certain groups seeking to destabilize the government.

The administration's theory about an opposition plot appeared to have been bolstered when Alan Paguia, former counsel of the deposed president, Joseph Estrada, came forward to admit that he did the "voice over" for the recording. But Estrada himself disowned Paguia, saying he ceased to be his lawyer after he was suspended from the practice of law by the Supreme Court. He said the opposition didn't have the capability to tap cell phones, which requires sophisticated and expensive equipment. He claimed that it was the President's "own people" who did it, and that the CDs were made public by Malacañang to divert the public's attention from the jueteng scandal.

But all these accusations and counteraccusations being thrown from both sides of the political fences suffer one major flaw: they don't add up. Assuming that the recording is authentic and that the opposition made it, why did it wait until now to make such an explosive revelation? The best time to do it would have been soon after the elections, when passions were still running high; or soon after Poe had filed his electoral protest, when the recordings would have supported his allegations of massive fraud.

Neither does it sound plausible that the administration would tape such a sensitive conversation, much less keep it for so long, unless it has suicidal tendencies. And it would have to be hopelessly stupid to reveal the existence of the recordings at this time to divert public attention from the Senate investigations on jueteng. That is like using gasoline to put out a fire.

So who could have done it? It could be any of our own intelligence agencies. Perhaps some people wanted to buy insurance or planned to employ blackmail to clinch contracts, appointments or favors, and recorded the President's conversations without her knowledge.

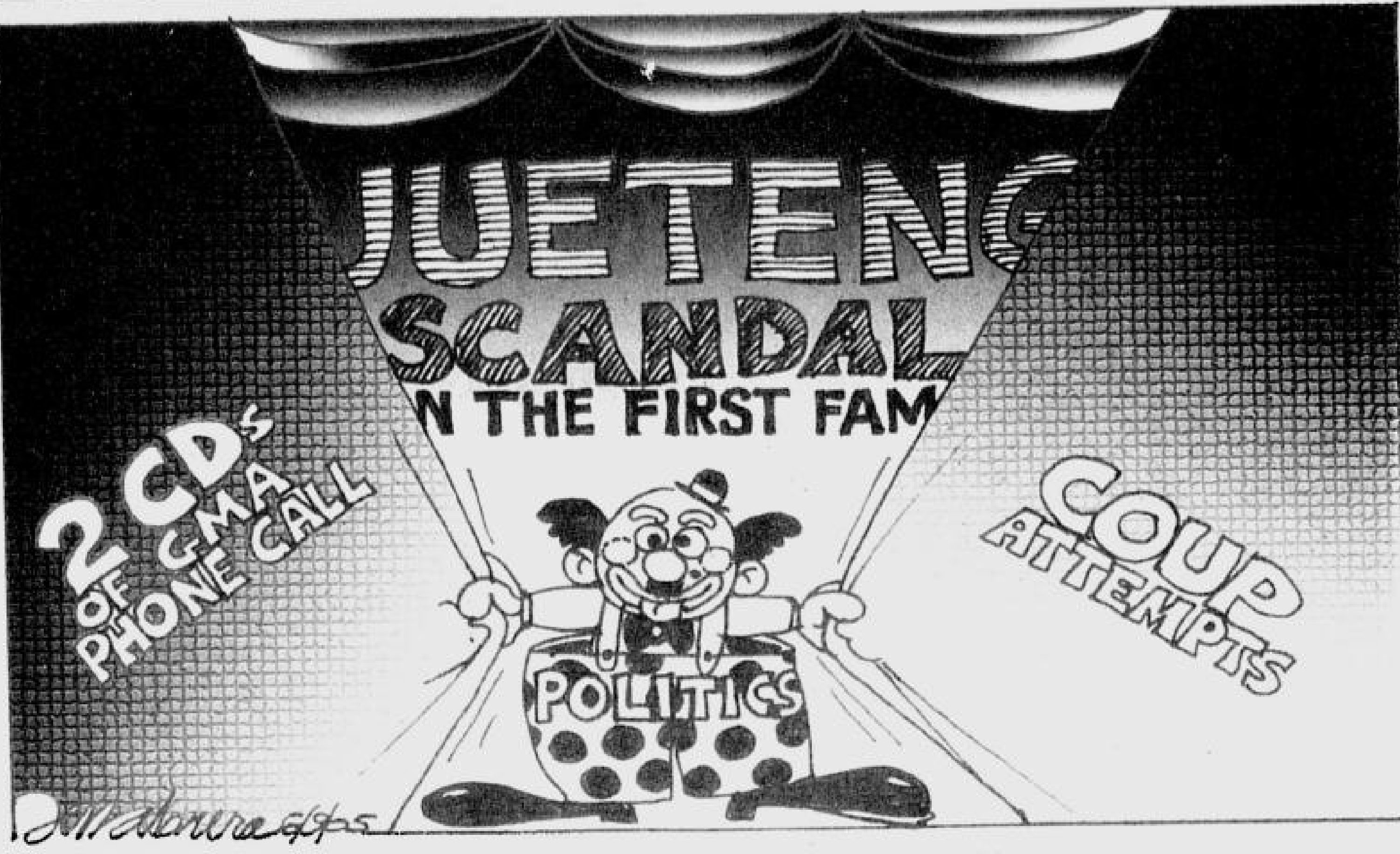
But the critical question is, does any government agency have the capability to eavesdrop on conversations conducted by cell phone? Some experts claim that it cannot be done since digital services are encrypted. In other words, if such kind of electronic eavesdropping can be done at all, it would require access to state-of-the-art equipment.

That kind of equipment the government doesn't have at the moment, according to National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales. "We actually don't have that capability yet," he said.

So who could possibly have the kind of sophisticated listening devices required for the job? The US Embassy says the US government had no hand in recording the President's conversation. Ronald Post, the embassy's counselor for public affairs, said the embassy had heard about the existence of the recording, but it did not come from them.

The Arroyo administration had better get to the bottom of this affair quickly. If the recording is real, then our national security has been compromised together with the legitimacy of the Arroyo presidency. And Ms Arroyo may be in deeper trouble than most people think, with some powerful forces working behind the scenes to undermine her administration.

But all this assumes that the recording is real. If it is fake, everyone can have his pick of favorite suspect.



Classroom treadmill

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

WHY does the re-opening of school bring back, for many, the mythical figure of Sisyphus (SIS-i-fus)?

In 1941, the writer Albert Camus thrust this barely remembered knave back into the limelight with his book on the futility and greatness of human endeavor. He titled it: "The Myth of Sisyphus."

Few recall how this cunning founder of Corinth conn[illegible]des to demonstrate the use of manacles—b[illegible]g himself. He bamboozled Persephone, Qu[illegible] the Dead with the yarn: his wife didn't pr[illegible]in to pay the boatman to cross the riv[illegible] Styx [illegible] Underworld. That won him a few more yea[illegible] arousing.

But Camus seared into people's minds a Sisyphus condemned to an eternity of rolling a boulder uphill. Upon reaching the peak, the rock would roll back down—and he'd start all over again.

Come June, do we like Sisyphus to "start all over again"?

News desks dust off last year's headlines: lack of classrooms, teacher shortages, inadequate books, more students, etc. Editors dub these unchanging stories *de cajon*.

Only the numbers shift. This year, Education Secretary Florencio Abad expects 17.6 million students will enroll. That's seven times the number who showed up after World War II.

We are short of 57,000 classrooms (Or is it 8,644, as Abad claims?). The shortfall was 25,816 in 2000. We need about 10,000 teachers more. "Only 57 of every 100 boys who enter first year end up with a high school diploma compared to 71 girls," notes Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism's Yvonne Chua.

"Sheer size determined thinking about (education) to the exclusion of all other policy concerns," the Philippine Human Development Report pointed out. Valiant efforts—from remedial "bridge programs" to printing more textbooks—seem overwhelmed, like Sisyphus.

But the 21st century is one of radical rapid change. Internet and the cell phone symbolize the mutations. Out of every 1,000 Filipinos, only 44 were linked to the Internet in 2002. Compare that to 319 Malaysians. As knowledge "implodes," our schools bog down in Sisyphus-like problems.

"New communication technologies and plummeting computer costs are transforming distance, eroding borders and time," the World Bank observes. "But people still lack basic, life-saving knowledge because simple information does not flow as readily as one would hope."

"The Philippines has one of the shortest elementary and secondary periods: 10 years," noted an INQUIRER editorial. "Other Asian countries give 11 to 12 years."

But the foundation for effective schooling is laid before the kids appear for Grade I. "At least 68 percent of Filipino children, between the ages of three and five, were not enrolled in any form of early childhood education," notes the United Nations report: "A Common View, A Common Journey."

One out of every four barangays "remain without day-care centers and access to early child care, and development is scarce in rural areas....More girls attend pre-school than boys."

"Knowledge is at the core of all our development effort," the World Development Report asserts. "Unexpected solutions to seemingly intractable problems will be discovered" if priority is given to issues like education.

But our current national debates are strapped to Never-Never land: from "Lion King of *jueteng* to gerry-mandering provinces, to wire-tappers strutting around as heroes, etc.

In the past half century, the world economy grew fourfold, the Worldwatch Institute notes. Despite high population growth rates in developing counties, average per capita income increased by 30 percent. Adult illiteracy and infant mortality were cut by half.

But these marched in lockstep with environmental degradation: Productivity of farms and fisheries, in the Philippines, is declining with ecological decay.

More than 400 plant and animal species are threatened with extinction. About two-thirds of the country's original mangroves have been backsliding in quality, INQUIRER economist-in-residence Cielito Habito notes. Foreign students have stopped coming to Los Baños or Muñoz.

We see, meanwhile, growing social strains from massive penury to crime rates that spawn death squads. We're in poor shape to cope with a world that, in 50 years, would have a gross domestic product of $140 trillion. Total population then may be nine billion.

The country must harness radical changes ahead or be swamped by it. To keep our heads above water, we must equip citizens with learning more than what jueteng facilitators require. We must bridge knowledge gaps between the impoverished communities and the affluent in gated enclaves. Citizen participation in inclusive and transparent governance is possible only with education.

The burden of ensuring sustainable growth development must be shared, the World Development Report stresses. Civil society groups, for example, contribute best when they served as a voice for dispersed voiceless communities.

The tasks ahead are gruelling: to stamp out demeaning penury, foster economic growth, improve social cohesion and reverse ecological plunder—over a 50-year time frame.

Half-literates—graduating from substandard schools, led by "leaders" who can't budge beyond clawing for political power and casting about for coup muscle—can't hack it.

"In the end, the most radical reform to break the impasse of basic education is to empower local communities," the Philippine Human Development Report suggests. Would Sisyphus then break away from this endless treadmill?

* * *

E-mail: juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph

Change the government, not the Charter

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

QUESTION: Con-Con or Con-Com?

Answer: Neither of the above.

The choice is a specious one, and the debate presumably raging between President Macapagal-Arroyo and Jose de Venecia a spurious one. GMA, of course, has expressed her preference for a Constitutional Convention, whose delegates would be voted at large. De Venecia wants a Constitutional Commission, which would be composed of his pals from Congress. It's a non-issue. The real issue is whether we should change the Charter at all. There are three compelling reasons why we should not, at least at this time.

The first and most immediate one is that GMA's and De Venecia's proposal clearly has little to do with replacing the Charter with a better one. It has a lot to do with not changing them with better leaders. Changing the Charter allows GMA to skirt the constitutional ban against running for another term as president. She can run again for prime minister—granting that she can finish her term amid the scandal after scandal currently blowing up in her face. Though not if De Venecia can first maneuver himself into a position of advantage through his allies in Congress. Which is the only way he can ever become head of government, by being voted into power by his, well, the word is "peers," but it takes on the most richly ironic meanings in this case.

That was what Ferdinand Marcos tried to do too during his second term as president. A change in government was his first option for staying in power and he put it into motion with the Con-Con of 1970. A shift to a parliamentary system, which was first on the Con-Con agenda, had the added advantage of assuring Marcos' continued rule despite having become hugely unpopular (and despite his new rival, Ninoy Aquino, becoming the opposite) because, unlike a president, a prime minister was not voted at large, only by the victorious party. Marcos' stock fell during the 1969 elections when he unleashed guns, goons, and gold to a then unparalleled extent to get reelected.

A couple of months later, in January 1970, the country erupted in flames, lasting for three months, which became known as the First Quarter Storm. Until he declared martial law in 1972, Marcos' rule remained fitful, both he and Imelda becoming the two people their country most loved to hate.

Ah, but déjà vu, this country seems truly doomed to repeat its history for failing to read it. The parallels are frighteningly uncanny. GMA can also always count on a parliamentary system to get around her increasing unpopularity. She can always rely on her party-mates to foist her as prime minister upon the nation. But now an interesting question: Assuming again she lasts her term, will she resort to something akin to martial law if her ambitions are thwarted in that respect? Well, there is one parallel between then and now that is more chilling than the rest, which is that GMA, like Marcos, has no concept of limits. They both think nothing of lifting the bar on what's permissible in politics. Indeed, if many people are to be believed, we are already under a disguised authoritarianism, the wholesale murder of journalists being only its latest symptom.

The second reason for saying no to a Charter change at this time is that it is a monumental distraction. It is not a monumental distraction from GMA's heroic struggle to reform the country, which is a delusion, notwithstanding that she advertises it at every turn in the hope that a lie when repeated constantly becomes the truth. It is a monumental distraction from our need to decide whether the current government still has the mandate to rule, by earth or by heaven.

I've never bought that idiotic idea that for the country to move ahead, it should ignore ills that are plaguing it and concentrate only on the positive, constructive, feel-good aspects of life. There is nothing positive, constructive or feel-good about being blind—or deaf—to evil. No hut has yet withstood the test of wind and rain that is built on rotten stilts. No wound has yet healed that has a Band-Aid plastered on it while gangrene festers underneath. No Constitution, produced by the best minds or not, forged by a Con-Con or a Con-Com, has yet worked that is wielded by those who mean to thwart it.

Which brings us to the third reason why a new Charter is completely unnecessary, apart from being irrational, at this point. That is: Why should we want to change a Constitution we haven't really tried? The premise for changing the Charter is that it hasn't worked. Well, how in God's name can the current one work when it is flouted at every turn by this country's leaders, this last one above all?

The Constitution says education is the highest priority of this country. To this day, debt payments get the biggest share of the budget—and must be paid, courtesy of "automatic appropriation," come hell or high water—something education does not enjoy. The Constitution starts off with the Bill of Rights, with a preface to stress its sacredness. Today, national security takes precedence over civil rights in the name of anti-terrorism, journalists are murdered en masse, and the freedoms of expression, assembly and of the press are being routinely curtailed. The Constitution says the country is a sovereign nation. Today GMA cedes sovereignty right and left to George W. Bush. The Constitution says "People Power" is a divine inspiration and should be institutionalized. Raul Gonzalez says protesters are "destabilizers" and should be jailed. The list goes on.

In fact, never mind the Constitution, mind only common sense. Common sense says you should not lie, cheat and steal. Today, that is the motto emblazoned on the presidential seal.

Change the Charter? Change the government!

Paguia's 'editing' damages tape's credibility

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

AT THE DINNER tendered last Monday by Speaker Jose de Venecia for Dr. Torao Tokuda, chair of Tokushukai Medical Corp. which is planning to build a hospital here dedicated to Ninoy Aquino, the irrepressible Makati Rep. Butz Aquino had our table giggling. He quipped that the current destabilization reports against the administration must be fueled by Vice President Noli de Castro, who stands to immediately benefit from President Macapagal-Arroyo's downfall. Butz joked that the Wednesday Group in the Senate, which counts De Castro as its most prominent member, is encouraging the destabilization efforts, but since it doesn't have military backing, "the Wednesday Group will only last until Friday."

* * *

Aquino spoke in a very light vein, but there are those who are taking all the rumors quite seriously, including the Palace, the Philippine National Police and national security agencies. The administration seems to think that the opposition is actively engaged in the destabilization efforts, which opposition leaders Joseph Estrada and Francis Escudero promptly denied. In fact, some opposition people believe that the tale of two tapes was preemptively exposed by the Palace to cover up the *jueteng* scandal. One thing is sure: as this column predicted earlier, with the tapes, the Senate hearings on jueteng are all the more bound to die from boredom.

* * *

It's easy to see that the Palace stands to gain enormously from causing another scandal to erupt, just to take the wind out of the jueteng exposés. But looking at the recent confluence of events, it's also easy to conclude that the opposition is behind the recent moves to oust GMA.

First, there are the jueteng exposés in Congress, which came in the wake of the recent passage of the amended VAT law and the survey results showing GMA having an all-time low negative approval rating. Although Archbishop Oscar Cruz probably would not allow himself to be used for political ends, still, some of the people who conveniently knocked on his door to present themselves as witnesses appear to be politically tainted as jueteng witnesses.

Then came the two tapes, one said to be authentic, the other fake. Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye preempted the planned press conference last Monday by opposition lawyer Homobono Adaza to announce the existence of the taped conversations allegedly between GMA and Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano, wherein she purportedly ordered him to ensure and safeguard her one million vote lead over Fernando Poe Jr. Bunye presented together with the "fake" tape what he claimed to be the "authentic" one, featuring conversations between GMA and an administration political officer known only as "Gary," as they discussed her vote leads in various areas. The "Garcillano tape" is expected to buttress the opposition's pet theory that GMA cheated FPJ last May 2004.

* * *

The third step, administration strategists suspect, will come in the form of the filing of an impeachment case against GMA by leftist members of the House, not by the opposition. Representatives Liza Masa and Teddy Casiño have already indicated they would move to have her impeached, "if the tape proves authentic." The filing is expected take place when Congress, which adjourned yesterday, reopens at the end of July. In the meantime, the public is being fed the contents of the tapes over radio, presumably to condition them to prepare to take to the streets, if and when. Alongside these efforts is the reported recruitment of soldiers and policemen for a coup attempt against the President.

* * *

It seems indeed like there is a step-by-step plot against GMA. The problem is that in the jueteng case, the accusations against the President's husband and son have not been substantiated with direct testimony, as even Sen. Aquilino Pimentel has noted. But political assassination is very much a game of perception and in this exercise the opposition seems to be always one step ahead of the administration. Yet, for all its bungling, as one columnist put it, the heavens still smile on GMA. Lo and behold, Erap's former lawyer, Alan Paguia, whom the Supreme Court had suspended after he made scathing accusations against its alleged partiality toward GMA, admitted that he was the one who released the tape that Bunye had termed "fake." Paguia said he had worked on what was a three-hour long tape and edited it for public consumption, doing the "voice-over" himself. The Palace quickly decried that Erap's former lawyer had "doctored" it. To my mind, Paguia's admission shot down the tape's credibility faster and more effectively than the NBI could.

* * *

I had earlier lamented that the physically challenged former journalist Grace Padaca, who earned the admiration of the country when she defeated her seemingly well-entrenched opponent, Gov. Faustino Dy Jr., hoisted the white flag in the battle against jueteng, so early in her term. She was quoted as batting for its legalization. I mentioned her critics' assertion that she was on the take from jueteng.

Padaca called to protest that I did not read her entire statement, which said that she was taking that stand "out of desperation," which was, in turn, "borne out of frustration." She said that Isabela mayors have not cooperated with her anti-jueteng campaign because they say they need the payola to answer their constituents' requests for help with regard to the usual cradle-to-tomb needs. But Padaca said she has not given up. After failing to obtain cooperation from below, she has decided "to go up." She asked the PNP top brass for the relief of the provincial commander who had links with the politicos, and her request was granted. She says she's now ready to work with the new commander, hoping that public opinion would be with her.

Good luck, Governor.

Peace lessons in public schools

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

A FELLOW journalist and friend gave me a copy of the draft of "Peace Education Teaching Exemplars for Elementary Schools" which, she said, will be published as a teaching guide for teachers. She told me that some peace-conscious parents who had read the draft were wondering whether this draft has passed scrutiny and will soon be used for the peace education of their children.

The book project is the joint initiative of the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP).

So concerned was this friend that she set a meeting so that she could show me what it was all about. She was worried that the book's printing seemed imminent. I told her I was not an educator in the strict sense of the word but I have close friends in the Education Revolution and Mentoring for Mentors Program of the Foundation for World Wide People Power whom I could consult.

I promised to go over the draft (which has almost 50 lessons for Grades 1 to 6) with plain common sense and as if I were the pupil myself. The very first lesson for Grade 1 caught my attention. Here it is.

Pamagat: Ang Aking Mag-anak
Aralin: Makabayan (Sibika at Kultura)
Baitang: 1
Mensahe: May mahalagang ginagampanan ang mga kasapi ng isang mag-anak sa pagpapanatili ng kapayapaan sa tahanan.
Takdang Panahon: 60 minuto
I. Layunin:
A. Nasasabi ang kahalagaan ng pagsasagawa ng bahaging dapat gampanan.
B. Natutukoy ang mga salik/elemento sa pagkakaroon ng mapayapang tahanan.
II. Nilalaman
A. Paksa: Ang Aking Maganak
B. Peace Concept: Interpersonal skills
C. Kagamitang Panturo: (blank)
III. Pamamaraan
A.Gawain:
Magpakuwento sa mga mag-aaral ng tungkol sa mga tungkulin o gawaing ginagampanan ng bawat miyembro ng kani-kanilang pamilya. Itala ang ilang mga sagot sa pisara.

Halimbawa:
A. Gawain
Tatay: naghahanap buhay
Nanay: namamalengke, nagluluto
Kuya: tumutulong sa paggawa ng assignment
Mag-aaral: tumutulong sa paglilinis ng bahay

B. Pagsusuri...
(More follow...)

The examples in the first salvo (Page 1, Grade 1) just jumped at me. I do not mean to question the pedagogic skills of those who made the lesson. But I couldn't help noticing the sexist slant of the *halimbawa* or example. The father is the breadwinner and the mother goes to market and cooks.

These are just examples, of course. A gender-sensitive teacher could always redirect the discussion toward a more egalitarian scenario and even stress that the examples given above are not to be the standard for normalcy. But how many teachers would go beyond the examples given if there are no suggestions for them to do so?

How many true stories have I heard about children complaining to their mothers (yes, their mothers) that when they recited and told the class that their fathers cooked and often stayed at home while their mothers went to the office every day, their families were looked upon as special cases or that their examples weren't too correct?

Right now, I can count at least five married women I know who are main bread winners of their families. Their husbands earn supplementary incomes.

But I also encountered fathers who did so-called mother roles while their wives were abroad working. A couple of years ago I did a series on "left-behind husbands" who had OFW (overseas Filipino worker) wives.

One husband took care of his two young children so conscientiously and his thriving vegetable farm as well. On a typical day, he cooked breakfast, drove the children to school in his owner-type jeep, went home to do work on the farm, did some washing (on scheduled days), cooked and brought hot lunch to his kids in school. He then went home to rest and do some house work. In the afternoon he fetched the kids. On Sundays, he and the kids would attend Mass and then go to a favorite fast-food joint for lunch.

This guy was as masculine as masculine gets and was a respected official in the barangay. His story was included in a book on families of Asian migrant workers.

I could see the value of starting with the family as the first setting where a child should experience peace, equality and justice. But the school's teaching tools on the subject of peace must be sharp and reality-based.

"The main objective of the exemplars," former DepEd Secretary Edilberto de Jesus wrote, "is to expose the learners to life-related classroom experiences which require cooperative efforts and group dynamics in the application and demonstration of peace-building skills and conflict resolutions techniques." This is in line with the government's peace efforts, he added.

The effort is indeed laudable but there is a small group that wants the book to be reevaluated. These persons, if they have suggestions to improve the book, should get in touch with OPAPP's Secretary Ging Quintos-Deles, herself a known peace and feminist advocate before she took on the peace post.

Deles said in her message included in the book: "By institutionalizing peace education through our public school curriculum, we are called to ensure a genuine institutional response by disseminating these modules as well as providing the adequate resources and policy support to enable our public school teachers to carry these through."

* * *

Send comments to cerespd@info.com.ph

Diplomats under fire

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

OUR ambassador to Israel was recently in hot water, for comparing the Israeli authorities to the Gestapo of Nazi Germany in their treatment of Filipino workers. That was a remark made in colossal bad taste, and of remarkable insensitivity, in a nation composed of people targeted for liquidation by Adolf Hitler. There are mitigating circumstances, however.

First, the remark was made in the heat of the moment, out of our diplomatic representative's desire to do his work, which is to look after the welfare of his countrymen, victims of ill-treatment by authorities of a foreign state.

Second, with remarkable and admirable willingness, he apologized to those he had offended. We have all too long, all too often, seen Filipino diplomats indifferent to the plight of their countrymen abroad, and Filipino officials unwilling or unable to apologize for something they did wrong.

For all that Ambassador Antonio Modena did, the end result is a pledge from the Israeli government to attend to the legitimate concerns of Filipinos. It will be up to the next Philippine ambassador to Israel to ensure that this pledge is honored. For one thing is sure: Having immolated himself in this manner, Ambassador Modena cannot be sent back to Tel Aviv.

Another Philippine diplomat, Cecille Rebong, consul general to New York, is in trouble. She is under fire for paying $10,000 a month in rent for her official residence in New York City, located in the Trump Tower. Such things crop up from time to time: This is not the first time that the choice of residence of a Philippine diplomat has been the subject of some controversy. Either she crossed someone, or somebody in Manila wants her job. This is an unfortunate, but not unexpected, consequence of life in the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Anyway, I find nothing wrong or scandalous in Cecille's official residence in New York.

Indeed, compared to junior diplomats of other developing countries such as Thailand, who also reside in her building, her residence is modest—and she is the consul general! Hers is a two-bedroom apartment; perhaps, people are confused by the place being called Trump Tower.

This whole case should really raise two issues, which are connected: the DFA's lack of foresight (perhaps, this is culturally ingrained) and the sorry state of remuneration for DFA personnel.

On the issue of lack of foresight, we let our properties go to hell faster than the devil himself. The consul general has an unusable residence in the former Marcos townhouse on 66th Street. Other countries have recognized the importance of representation—of presenting a credible and positive image of the country. They therefore ensure that the physical facilities of the post (office and residence of the head of post) and the diplomatic staff themselves are likewise well situated and presented. Would you do business, or be willing to do business, in another country if your interlocutor does not inspire confidence?

Many countries, taking into account the crazy cost of real estate, have chosen to either build or buy their own properties, and maintain them, in order to ensure the smooth functioning of the mission and to present a positive image of themselves. This trades the escalating cost of rent for what should be much lower maintenance costs. So, rather than seeing a trade-off between rent and maintenance, we expect a free ride and skimp on maintenance. Indeed, this is why many heads of post prefer to rent office space and residence—it may be more expensive but, at least, you can be sure that the facilities are maintained.

The DFA has made an effort in recent years to acquire real properties. But once bought, the properties suffer from our culture of neglect and decay. The decision should be taken, and adhered to, that once we own the properties, we must properly maintain them.

On remuneration, DFA personnel are all supposed to live within their allowances, including a housing allowance. These may seem generous in peso terms, but sadly the world does not operate on the Philippine peso, and the cost of living overseas can be very high indeed. Making matters worse is that it is more than 10 years ago since these allowances were adjusted! As things stand, due to the low allowances, heads of post are normally given actual rental to enable them to live in the dignity required of their position.

With the erosion of the dollar, and inflation over the last 10 years, you get an idea of how bad the situation is overseas, especially when we compare the income of Philippine diplomats to their Asean counterparts. If we had reasonable allowances for our diplomats, adjusted for inflation (something I proposed for all civil servants in this column), Consul General Rebong's case would not have drawn any malicious inferences, as she should have been within her allowances. We would, also, have higher morale in the DFA and thus produce more work, and have less time for idle gossip.

Anyway, this is a non-issue, and we should accept that our diplomats, especially our heads of post, should represent us in a dignified manner that we would be proud of. We should also support the idea that our diplomats should represent the best and brightest that the Philippines has to offer, and that we should be willing to pay for that level of quality in order to attract the best minds. Unless, of course, we have given up on our country and are resigned to project an image of mediocrity, abject misery and defeat.

* * *

Comments? www.quezon.ph/blog

A graduation gift

YOUNG BLOOD

Mabelle Biong Dajao

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

DEAR Butoi,

I know you hate it when I call you that. Anyway, I'm writing because it's all I can do because I'm broke. Consider this as my graduation gift to you.

You are about to enter high school, the zone of identity crises and peer pressure, infatuation and first dates, hormones and zits. Be prepared, little brother. Be very prepared.

I am going to spill some secrets, mostly lessons that aren't taught in class. But do not let your learning stop here because even if you memorize all these, there are still more lessons that you'll learn on your own.

The hardest lesson I've learned is that friends are earned. They do not just present themselves to you as you wish. You have to find them. But you have to be a friend first before you can find one. They are living testimonies of your worth as a person, so choose your friends wisely.

Choose but do not discriminate. Do not judge people according to the capacity of their brains or the thickness of their wallets or the extent of their popularity. Big brains don't necessarily go with big hearts. People with fat wallets usually have fat egos. Popularity doesn't guarantee a good character. Look into their hearts and the way they live their lives and how they accept you for being you.

Do not impose yourself on people who clearly don't want to be with you. Some people will hate you no matter how good you are to them. Steer clear of these monsters; they'll feed on your self-esteem. You are under no obligation to prolong the existence of such hideous creatures.

People hate and love you for no apparent reason. But try to be lovable anyway. You have nothing to lose in being good.

Talk to Papa and Mama regularly. Tell them everything that's troubling you with all honesty. Don't hold back. If you encounter serious problems, ask for their advice. They love it when you do that.

Life in high school is tough. Growing up is tough. But hold on to your principles. You need to keep a good grip on them especially when the emotional roller-coaster starts. Amid confusion; don't lose sight of your goals and of what you want to be when you grow up. It is important to dream, but be realistic. Let Papa and Mama be your connection with reality.

Don't allow your world to be governed by just one person. Expand your horizon. Do not be too dependent on someone. Depend on yourself, but do not be too self-absorbed as to think that you can exist alone, without human company. It is not only weird; it is unhealthy.

Take it from me. One weirdo in the family is enough. Everybody is interconnected, so everybody is interdependent. Nourish your social life. Have lots of acquaintances. Be with different kinds of people.

Different but not indifferent. Indifference spoils everything. It reduces something to nothing. It's the worst that can happen to an adolescent. An indifferent young person grows old before his time.

Cultivate your enthusiasm. Develop your personality. You have so much potential. Laugh with a lot of people but reserve your tears for those who truly care.

Just because you are different from the rest doesn't mean you're a freak. Sure you're small; it's in your genes—our genes. Take comfort in the fact that soon you will outgrow me by several inches. I am sure of that. Kill me if it doesn't happen.

But really, there's nothing wrong with being short or having frizzy hair or crooked teeth. These are just appearances, although high school students make a big deal of these things. Don't let insecurity erode your self-confidence. Physical appearance plays a role in first impressions but that's about it. What really matters is your personality and outlook in life.

You're lucky you need not wear braces. You may have to wear teeth braces, but not the Milwaukee. Not the kind that makes you look like a rejected robot. Not the kind that makes you want to put paper bag over your head. Not the kind I had.

You're lucky, but don't push your luck too hard. Be conscious of your posture. Straighten your back. I don't want you to be like me.

Do not be intimidated by smart people—the ones that are smarter than you. Bear in mind that being smart is not the only prerequisite to success. It may appear as though smart people have an edge in life, in choosing their career paths, in getting admission to prestigious colleges, in acquiring scholarships. They have clear plans about their future.

But smart kids usually have their weaknesses embedded in their chests. Most of them lose their sense of equilibrium once their hearts come under attack. No one can love wisely. No one, and especially not the smart ones.

What appears like love is often just infatuation. It is not just sparks and butterflies and spontaneous combustion though it may start with that (and in my book it has to start with that). These things are common in young adults. I had plenty when I was your age. Love is beyond all that. It is beyond all reason.

But I am in no position to discuss it thoroughly. Heck, I'm still waiting for it to happen. There have been many false alarms and fair warnings. I do not know much about love and loving. In the vast ocean of love, I only have a thimble of understanding.

But this is what I have come to understand: to love is to accept the verdict of reality without bitterness, without regret, without a smidgen of a doubt. When you love, you will get hurt. Accept it as a fact. It's part of the pain-pleasure phenomenon. You cannot love wisely because loving doesn't involve thinking. Thinking results in a conscious choice. But you cannot choose whom to fall in love with. The trick is to wait for the right time.

It is not advisable to fall in love while you still have your studies to attend to. Stay away from it, if possible. You cannot avoid it, but you can at least throw some barriers in its path. Be cautious of that feeling and don't let it take root. Not yet. Love is a totally new experience hat can turn you into a totally new person. Pray that you will not fall prey to love's fatal embrace—not yet, anyway.

I'm done lecturing you. Be good.

Mabelle Biong Dajao, 20, is a Medical Technology student at Velez College in Cebu City.

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Diplomat's lavish residence an insult to poor Filipinos

AS a working Filipina who has been in New York City for 10 years, I find foreign affairs department's spokesperson Gilberto Asuque's remarks in defense of Consul General Cecilia Rebong's lavish condo rental outrageous.

There can be no rightful justification to Rebong's renting a pad in the Trump Tower, perhaps the poshest residential condominium in Manhattan, at $10,000 per month. And this after President Macapagal-Arroyo declared that the Philippines was in a "fiscal crisis."

What adds insult to injury is the comment that "it would not be appropriate to have [Rebong] staying in Queens."

Anyone familiar with NYC (New York City) demographics would know that the Queens hosts the largest number of Filipino residents and businesses in the city. So, why wouldn't it be more appropriate for the Department of Foreign Affairs to consider Queens as a neighborhood for Rebong?

It is amazing how a diplomat's tongue, in an attempt to justify the hijacking of funds that rightfully belong to starving Filipinos, could insult the working Filipinos of Queens, who constitute the vast majority of the constituents for whom Rebong was deployed here.

Perhaps, the folks over at the DFA need a good real estate broker who can enlighten them on the joys and wonders of the outstanding Queens neighborhoods which many Filipinos call their home and where they are proud to raise their families in—Astoria, Jackson Heights and Elmhurst to name a few.

Better yet, Rebong can call us over at the New York Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines, and we would gladly assist her in finding a more reasonably priced home.

We can't avoid looking at what the DFA is doing with the people's funds as a direct violation of the Filipino people's right to affordable education, affordable oil costs, affordable health care, jobs, food; the list goes on...

Last but not least, we suggest that Rebong, Asuque and company brush up on the latest regarding the catastrophe that we have come to know as the Philippine economy and fiscal crisis. Let's not forget under Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's Philippines, backbreaking tax hikes, such as the VAT, continue to be imposed upon a largely underemployed and undereducated Philippine population.

Besides, every day over 3,000 Filipinos decide that the only way they can put food in their children's mouths is by boarding a plane to look for work abroad, while the vast majority of workers who remain in the country continue to struggle for a measly P125-wage increase; more students quit school because of intolerable tuition fee hikes; and unarmed sugarcane workers in Cojuangco-owned Hacienda Luisita are shot dead by the military for striking against, among other things, a salary of P9.50 per day.

How can we arrive at a sincere and lasting resolution to the country's deficit problems in the face of such lewd excesses by the government?

—BERNA ELLORIN,
New York Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines
(NYCHRP), nychrp@yahoo.com

A very funny hide-and-seek game

BEFORE THE YULETIDE season in 2003, the Philippine National Police declared that what has been impossible to stop in the last 50 years had become a reality—the country was 95 percent *jueteng*-free.

But early in January 2004, jueteng reportedly resumed, engaging initially in "guerrilla-type" operations.

Then again, very recently, the PNP, through Chief Supt. Florante Baguio, head of the PNP Special Anti-Illegal Gambling Task Force, "declared that the whole of Luzon was '99 percent' cleared of the poor man's lotto." (PDI, 5/28/05) Does it mean that the illegal numbers game is still operating in 1 percent of Luzon? Why did they not say Luzon is 101 percent cleared of this malady?

Jueteng has been in our country for more than half a century, and it is now deeply rooted in our system. Just like hide-and-seek, it is a very funny game.

—TRINIDAD ESTURAS PETEZA,
JP Rizal Street,
Barangay Camambugan,
4600 Daet, Camarines Sur

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A heartening but also sad photo

THE PHOTO of 14 congressmen linked elbow-to-elbow to show their commitment to do something to ease the ordinary Filipino's ordeal with the high cost of medicines (PDI, 5/19/05) was heartening news. The high cost of medicines has become a heavy burden to many of our citizens and is indeed breaking the back of our society.

When I took a closer look at the photo, however, I couldn't help but feel sad when I noticed that not one of our congressmen from the three Samar provinces was there. I checked with the House of Representatives to find out if any one of them was among the 69 co-authors of the bill proposing to regulate the prices of medicines. To my shock and shame, not one of our representatives had bothered to sign as co-author of the bill.

That's how pathetic the performance record of our Samareño congressmen in the present Congress is. Even the party-list congressman supposedly representing the Waray-speaking region was nowhere to be found. At least, we already know what to do with him in the next elections.

For me, the only bright spot in that memorable photo was the presence of the representatives from Leyte, Remedios Petilla, Carmen Cari, Ed Veloso, Dodong Codilla and Oging Mercado.

If all but one of the Leyte congressmen are co-authors of the bill, how come not one Samareño lawmaker is?

It saddens me no end because we, Samareños, are among those hit hardest by the high cost of medicines and lack of health care services. Besides, the high cost of medicines is a national concern, not just because it affects millions of Filipino families but also because it can spell—as reportedly it has in not a few past instances—the difference between life and death for many of our long-suffering people.

—JUAN CAMPOMANES,
Pepin St., Sampaloc, Manila

Rebong's NY residence temporary and necessary

RECENT stories in the INQUIRER have called attention to the rental for my current official residence as Philippine consul general in New York. I appreciate and share your concerns over the need to ensure that the resources of the Philippine government are properly and responsibly used. I would like to assure you that in renting my official residence, every effort was taken to ensure that, under the circumstances, the Philippine government would receive the value of its expenditure, and that all laws, rules and regulations were observed in the process. This was a process that included a collegial examination and consideration of the lease contract by the appropriate offices of the department, approval by then Foreign Secretary Delia D. Albert and the passing of required auditing and accounting requirements.

As part of my duties, I have hosted functions and meetings with American investors, employers, community leaders, government officials, cultural leaders, members of media, other diplomats and consular officials and Filipino community leaders at my current residence. Such functions and meetings are intended to build goodwill and close, personal ties in pursuing our interests: promoting investments, trade, tourism and Philippine culture; updating officials on developments in our country; ensuring that employers give Filipino employees the best terms; and helping build close ties with and within the Filipino community.

When I assumed my post as consul general in late 2003, I knew that finding an appropriate official residence to carry out my functions would be a challenge. Until renovations are completed on our property at East 66th Street, I would have to rent a residence which:

- was close to the consulate general
- was centrally located to facilitate the holding of official and community functions
- accepted diplomats and consular officials as tenants
- allowed the "diplomatic clause" (early termination without penalty if termination is for official reasons) in the lease contract
- had rent within the range given to previous consuls general in New York.

Faced with the above challenges, and the typically high price range of New York rental properties, we had a difficult time looking for a suitable official residence. While we were presented with several choices in midtown Manhattan, we eventually decided on a two-bedroom apartment at the Trump Tower along First Avenue.

It may bear stressing that, according to highly respected survey institutions, New York is among the top three most expensive cities in the world.

Even as I intend to maximize the opportunities provided by my current official residence for pursuing our interests, I continue to make regular searches and inquiries as to other possible accommodations that could address our needs and these circumstances for less cost.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to air my side.

—CECILIA B. REBONG,
Philippine consul general,
New York, USA

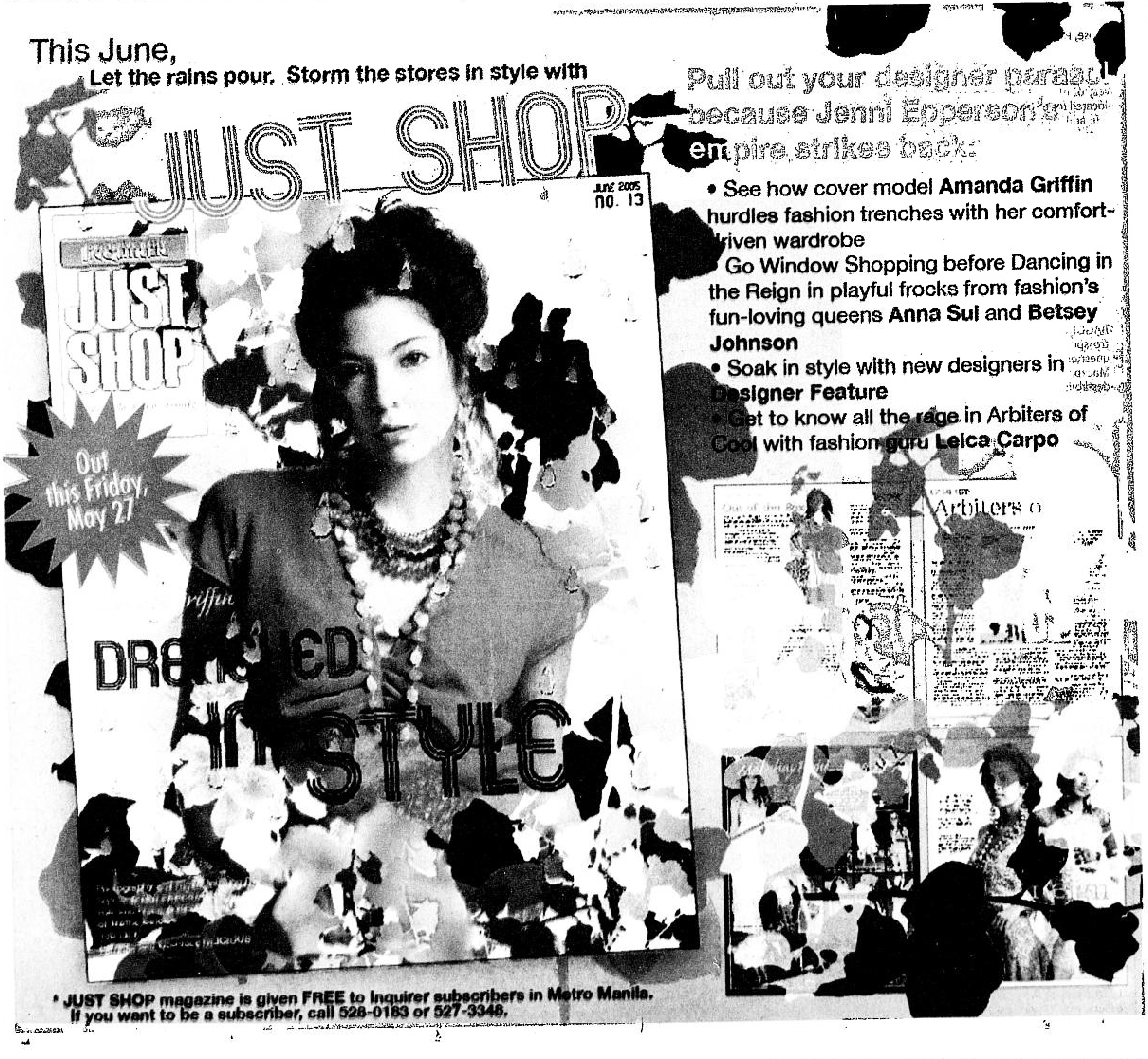
Easy way to fight criminality

QUOTING his field commanders and police chiefs, PNP Director General Arturo Lomibao has declared the whole of Luzon "*jueteng*-free."

This accomplishment, coming so quickly after President Macapagal-Arroyo's declaration of total war against jueteng, is amazing, prodigious, colossal, herculean, stupendous, titanic...words fail me.

GMA should now declare war on prohibited drugs, kidnapping and prostitution, so in a matter of weeks (days!), Lomibao can also declare this country totally free of drug lords, kidnappers and pimps.

—J. S. ONG,
13 San Mateo,
Bo. Capitolyo, Pasig City



Pull out your designer parasol because Jenni Epperson's empire strikes back:

- See how cover model **Amanda Griffin** hurdles fashion trenches with her comfort-driven wardrobe
- Go Window Shopping before Dancing in the Reign in playful frocks from fashion's fun-loving queens **Anna Sui** and **Betsey Johnson**
- Soak in style with new designers in **Designer Feature**
- Get to know all the rage in Arbiters of Cool with fashion guru **Leica Carpo**

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10 rebs slain in Agusan battle, Army says

NPA GUERRILLAS near Andap Valley are gearing for attacks as the military launch offensives against the rebel group in Surigao del Sur.
FRANKLIN A. CALIGUID/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

BUTUAN CITY—At least 10 New People's Army (NPA) rebels were killed during a gunfight in Loreto, Agusan del Sur yesterday, the military said.

Maj. Emmanuel Aguaviva, spokesperson of the Army's 402nd Infantry Brigade based in Prosperidad town, said the clash was the offshoot of an NPA attack on a military detachment in Barangay Nueva Gracia around 5 a.m. of the same day.

Aguaviva said 22 soldiers and militiamen from the Army's 36 Infantry Battalion were manning the detachment when about 70 rebels pounded on their position.

"We had an advance information of the attack, so our men were able to defend their position and foiled the attack," he told the INQUIRER.

No government troop was harmed during the five-hour gunfight, Aguaviva said.

But the military was not able to recover the bodies of the slain rebels because these were dragged by their fleeing comrades.

Yesterday's attack in Loreto took place after a high-ranking communist official rallied rebels to step up attacks on government positions.

In a press briefing with selected reporters in a rebel hideout somewhere in Surigao del Sur last week, Jorge Madlos, spokesperson of the National Democratic Front in Northern Mindanao, said attacks were necessary to avenge the displacement of civilians due to the massive military operations in Andap Valley.

Andap Valley traverses Lianga, Marihatag, San Agustin and San Miguel towns in Surigao del Sur.

"Innocent civilians have been displaced and reports of human rights violations are widespread," Madlos said.

Thousands of civilians have fled their homes early last month for fear of being caught in the crossfire as the military bombed on suspected rebels positions. The evacuees have since returned home.

Madlos said that since the military offensives broke out in the region, 62 soldiers had been killed.

The military rejected this claim saying it was normal for the NPA to fabricate the number of casualties to make it appear it was against the government.

Only 10 soldiers and militiamen have died, according to Maj. Alexis Bravo, spokesperson of the 4th Infantry Division based in Cagayan de Oro City.

More than 30 rebels have been reported killed in the operations that lasted for about two weeks. *Franklin A. Caliguid, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

1.4M bags of Vietnam rice bring down prices in Bicol

NAGA CITY—The National Food Authority (NFA) has started flooding Bicol markets since last week with rice imported from Vietnam, bringing down local market prices, an NFA executive said yesterday.

Danilo Pastrana, NFA regional director, said they expected to see rice prices stabilize in Bicol after the harvest months, using the 1.4 million bags of Vietnam rice allocated to the region for market intervention.

To stabilize rice prices, the NFA floods the local market with cheaper imported rice to check manipulative prices that grains dealers impose, Pastrana said.

He said a container ship loaded with 200,000 bags of the Vietnam rice was expected to arrive next week, comprising the last delivery of the 1.4 million bags of Vietnam rice allocated for Bicol this year.

He added that the 545,183 bags from the 1.2 million bags of Vietnam rice delivered earlier had started to stabilize the prices of rice in the local markets, which, he said, had gone down by at least P2/kilo.

He said that their price monitoring in Bicol showed a slide from P20/kilo to P18/kilo for regular milled rice while the well-milled rice, from P22/kilo to P20/kilo.

Pastrana said the completion of delivery of the Vietnam rice here would add to rice supply controlled by the government.

"At present, the NFA in Bicol has a pre-set rice stock of 1.1 million bags. With a regional daily consumption of at least 32,000 bags, we are sufficient in rice for a little more than a month," he said.

Pastrana said the NFA was required to set aside an inventory equivalent to 30-day consumption in lean months and 15-day consumption in bumper months.

The regional director said Bicol still remains dependent on rice imported from Vietnam and Thailand because the region has been classified as less sufficient in rice production.

"Of the six Bicol provinces, it is only Camarines Sur that is achieving self-sufficiency in local rice production. Albay, Camarines Norte and Sorsogon are classified as less sufficient while Catanduanes and Masbate are in critical level when it comes to sufficiency in rice," he said. *Juan Escandor Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Noli spends whole day in Baguio fending off presidential talks

BAGUIO CITY—Vice President Noli de Castro spent the whole day here fending off questions about succeeding President Macapagal-Arroyo should a supposed destabilization plot against her prosper.

A conspiracy theory raised earlier by Makati Rep. Agapito Aquino established the vice president as the chief beneficiary of the release of allegedly wiretapped conversations of the President.

The audio compact discs obtained by the media suggest that Ms Arroyo had orchestrated the cheating during the presidential polls.

De Castro said he had nothing to do with the compact disk recordings.

DE CASTRO

He told reporters in nearby La Trinidad, Benguet, that he would have run for president had he wanted to clinch that post earlier than 2010 when his term as vice president ends.

Later in the afternoon here, De Castro again assured 100 land beneficiaries in the city that he was not aspiring for the presidency at the expense of Ms Arroyo.

"*Kung meron man hong gustong maging presidente ay mag-intay na lang tayo* ng 2010. *Tagal no? Kaya yung iba nainip. Kaya gusto nilang* i-short cut. *Gusto na nilang tapusin ang lahat at huwag nang hintayin ang* 2010 (If there is anyone who is interested in becoming president, [he or she] should wait for 2010. That's too long, right? That's why some people are impatient. That's why they want to take the shortcut, to end this administration without waiting for 2010)," he said.

"*Kaya po ako'y trabaho na lang ng trabaho habang sila, ang ibang kababayan ho natin na gustong manggulo sa Maynila, sabi ko'y diyan na lang kayo manggulo at ako'y magtratrabaho na lang* (That is why I just buried myself with work while the others, our fellow citizens want to destabilize Manila. So I said I'd rather leave them there while I continue working)," De Castro said.

"*Dahil ako nama'y nanumpa sa ilalim ng ating Konstitusyon na tayo'y maglilingkod sa bayan nang naaayon sa batas* (This is because I swore before the Constitution that I will serve my country within the bounds of law)," he added.

A government official said they were surprised when De Castro suddenly visited Northern Luzon to deliver land titles to beneficiaries, now that Malacañang was hounded by controversies from two fronts: the "jueteng" scandal linking two members of the First Family, and the CD recordings of Ms Arroyo.

De Castro, who heads the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC), returned to the city for the first time since the campaign to deliver titles to former employees of the Philippine National Railways and to former employees of the presidential mansion.

The vice president said he intended to visit La Union today to also address that province's housing problems.

He proceeded to La Trinidad in the morning, claiming that Ms Arroyo gave him marching orders to visit the trading post there. He also visited the town's cold storage facilities, which Ms Arroyo helped set up last year.

In his speech, De Castro said the government's plan is to reduce the housing backlog by a million before his and Ms Arroyo's terms of office end in 2010.

But a thunderclap that interrupted his speech gave De Castro the opportunity to joke: "*Sinungaling. Sabi ng kulog, sinungaling* (We're lying. The thunder is telling you we are lying)." *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

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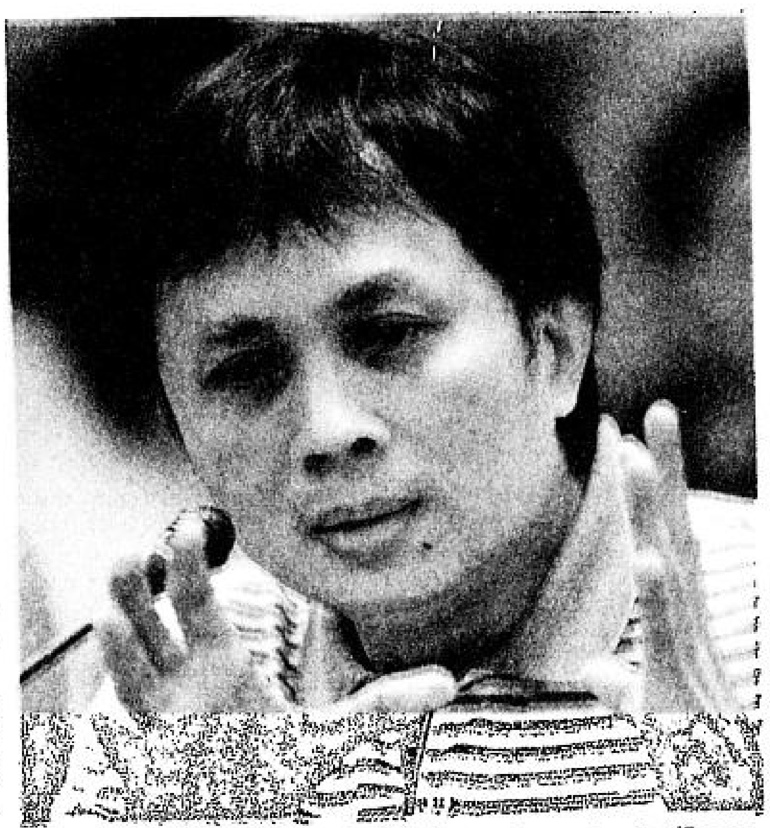
CRIMINAL OR ROBIN HOOD?

The man who blew the whistle on 'jueteng'

By Jed Ll. Bacason
Legazpi City

TO HIS detractors, confessed "jueteng" lord Wilfredo "Boy" Mayor is a criminal with a string of estafa and other cases. But to his friends and constituents in Barangay Tagas in Daraga, Albay, he is a modern-day Robin Hood.



WILFREDO "Boy" Mayor, confessed "jueteng" operator, testifies on payoffs before Senate investigators. JESS YUSON

Mayor, who has been barangay chair of Tagas for 11 years, grabbed the limelight on May 30 when he implicated several national officials and top police officers in jueteng payolas during an explosive testimony in a Senate hearing.

The 50-year-old whistle-blower told the Senate that President Macapagal-Arroyo's son, Pampanga Rep. Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo, and three other incumbent and former lawmakers from Albay had received monthly payoffs from the illegal numbers racket.

Those named have separately denied the allegations.

Criminal cases

Court records submitted to senior investigator Edzel Garcia of the PNP Regional Intelligence and Investigation Division showed that Mayor had been criminally charged 12 times—three cases of violation of the Anti-Gambling Law, one case of illegal possession of firearms, one estafa case and seven cases of violation of the Bouncing Check Law.

Mayor, a graduate of Bachelor of Science in Commerce from the Divine Word College of Legazpi City, was convicted of five counts of violation of the Bouncing Check Law but was cleared of all the other charges.

On Aug. 16, 2001, the Municipal Trial Court in the Cities-Fifth Judicial Region in Legazpi found Mayor guilty of violating the Bouncing Checks Law on five counts (Criminal Case Nos. 20002-20006) for issuing five Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. checks amounting to P660,000 to a certain Nathaniel Rempillo. The unfunded checks were issued in September, October and November of 1994.

Mayor was sentenced to one month imprisonment in each criminal case and was ordered to pay Rempillo the amounts reflected in the checks. In appealing the decision, he asked the Regional Trial Court to drop the penalty of imprisonment.

RTC Judge Alfredo Kallos ruled in favor of Mayor. He imposed a fine of P200,000 for the criminal offense and ordered him to pay the amounts reflected in the checks. The Supreme Court also approved Mayor's petition on Aug. 2, 2004.

Mayoral bid

Because of his conviction, the Commission on Elections in Daraga disqualified Mayor from running for town mayor during the 2004 elections as it acted on a petition filed by a certain Nelson Nuñez and Jerry Parian. Mayor was an independent candidate.

Alhough he was disqualified, the Comelec still counted his votes during the canvassing of ballots. Caridad Sazon, local election officer, said Mayor had filed for a motion for reconsideration, thus putting on hold the effectivity of the disqualification.

Mayor garnered 11,796 votes, while his rival, Jerry Jaucian, who is now the mayor, got 30,702 votes.

Robin Hood

To his constituents in the barangay, Mayor is a man with a big heart and good traits.

"He is a good and kind-hearted man," said a resident of Purok 6, who requested that he be identified only as Vic. "Boy always extends help to those in need. *Hindi siya maramot sa pera* (He is generous in giving money)."

"Mayor would not even ask questions when he gives donations," said Vic, 46.

He said Mayor would pay for the burial and snacks during the wake of even a dead relative of his constituents.

A tricycle driver, 30, who wanted to be identified only as Tony, said the whistle-blower had never refused requests for help. "He never thinks twice in extending help, especially to those who are sick."

Tony, a resident of Purok 2, admitted that it was common knowledge among people in the barangay that Mayor was a jueteng operator, but this didn't matter to them. "He had always shared whatever he had."

Mayor helped build a church in the barangay and funded several projects, including the construction of a drainage system and cementing muddy and dilapidated roads, he said.

Other residents, who declined to give their names for fear of being called to the Senate, attested to the goodness and generosity of Mayor. "It's saddening that Boy has involved himself in the Senate inquiry. He is a big loss to this community," one of them said.

Jueteng operator

A 58-year-old resident of Purok 3, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Mayor was the jueteng lord in Albay before he ran for mayor.

"He even had several bodyguards," he said.

"After the elections, we had new leaders in Albay so he [Mayor] lost his protection and his territories," he said.

Another resident, who introduced himself only as Alien, admitted that he was one of Mayor's henchmen and was also involved in jueteng. "I myself can vouch for the veracity of Boy's statements in the Senate," he said.

He confirmed that Mayor was also a jueteng operator in Pangasinan, Baguio City and Benguet, and that all the names mentioned by the witness in the Senate hearing indeed received monthly payolas.

An alleged jueteng fixer from Albay, Rizalino Serilla, who also appeared during Monday's Senate hearing, denied that Mayor was a jueteng lord and was capable of giving out millions of pesos in jueteng protection money.

When contacted by this writer, Serilla declined to be interviewed. According to him, he had stated everything in the press conference held at the National Bureau of Investigation last week and was advised by his lawyer to reserve his statements for a possible inquiry in the Senate.

"But if I had my way, I would even put up a sound system in the streets and tell the people everything about Mayor," he said.

Contractor

Warren Bahillo, the officer-in-charge of Barangay Tagas after Mayor left for Manila, said Mayor earned his living from being a contractor. Mayor owns and operates 3M Construction.

Bahillo admitted that Mayor "really was the jueteng operator here in Albay. You can ask anybody here. What Serilla claimed that Boy was just a fixer was just a lie."

He denied that Mayor had already resigned from his position in the barangay. He said Mayor filed an indefinite leave.

Bahillo also affirmed Mayor's generosity and that he had no vices.

Good leader

Opposition Councilor Pete Marcellana III, who ran in Mayor's team in the last election, cited the good leadership qualities of Mayor.

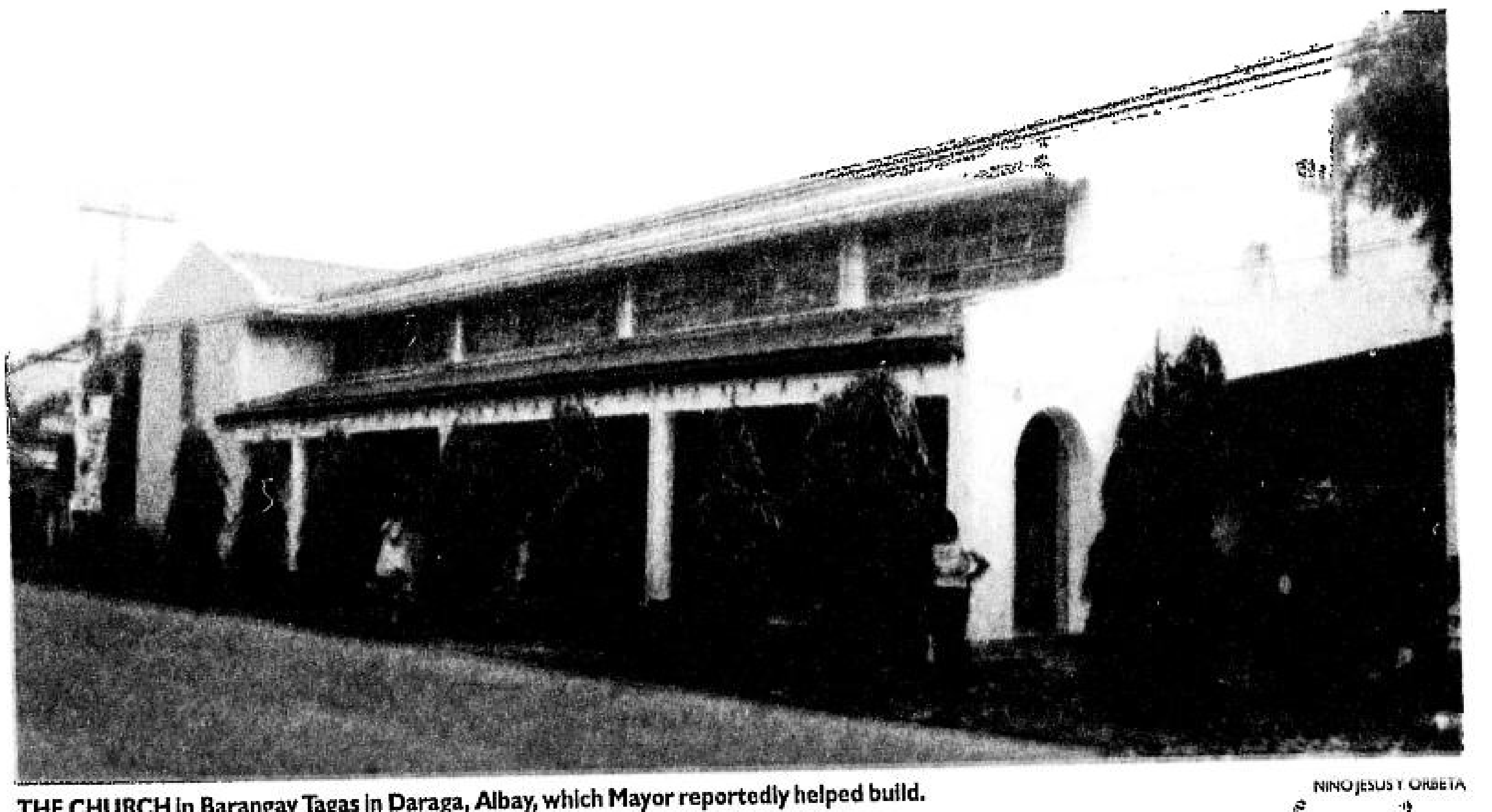
"Barangay Tagas is a showcase of Mayor's efficiency as a leader," Marcellana said, noting the barangay chair's beautification projects. "Boy is a good leader. Otherwise, I wouldn't have entrusted to him my candidacy. Had he won, he could have greatly contributed to the progress of Daraga."

One resident disagreed. Nelson Nuñez, who lives in Purok 3 and one of the petitioners for Mayor's disqualification, said Mayor was not even fit to be barangay chair because he admitted that he was a jueteng operator.

"The Department of the Interior and Local Government should take a look into this matter because a confessed jueteng operator is holding a government position," Nuñez said.

While he conceded that Mayor handled his job efficiently, he said Mayor was still not qualified.

"He was disqualified to hold the mayoral position of Daraga because he was convicted of criminal cases, but he was allowed to be the barangay captain of Tagas. Why?" he said.



THE CHURCH in Barangay Tagas in Daraga, Albay, which Mayor reportedly helped build. NINO JESUS Y. ORBETA

ABANGAN ABS-CBN
INSIDER
SA GITNA NG AKSYON, SA LOOB NG BALITA.
ANG IBANG ANGGULO NG MGA BALITA SA BAGONG

ROUNDUP

Barangay chair slain

TARLAC CITY—A village chair in Mayantoc, Tarlac was killed while his wife and son were wounded when they were ambushed in Barangay Poblacion in that town on Saturday. Police identified the fatality as Artemio Carmen Sr., 52, barangay chair of Pedro Quinez in Mayantoc. His wife Juanita, 49, and son Artemio Jr., 28, survived the attack and were taken to a hospital here. The Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas said Carmen was a member of the Alyansa ng mga Magbubukid ng Tarlak and a supporter of the labor strike at the Hacienda Luisita. Police said the victims were on their way home aboard a tricycle at 10:30 a.m. Saturday when four men riding on two motorcycles shot them.

Russell Arador, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Fire kills 6 persons

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Six persons, including a 3-year-old girl, died in a fire on Magay Street here yesterday dawn. Five others were hurt in the 2:45 a.m. fire. Survivor Aiza Mandi said one of those killed, whom she identified as 65-year-old Ong Uy Teck, was paralytic and was not able to jump off the two-story building. Another victim, Lau Mandag, 28, failed to escape as she was too weak to move following a recent childbirth. Her baby was still in the hospital when the incident happened. Her husband Dudung and 3-year-old daughter Junaida were killed in the fire. Fire Investigator Luciano Ocleasi said the fire razed three 50-year-old buildings and at least 10 business stalls. The buildings were considered residential and commercial, with the ground floors used as storage for scrap metal.

Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Malaria training

TALO TAYO DITO

LUCBAN, Quezon—Forty-nine barangay health workers from 10 towns in Quezon have finished a two-day training and seminar on malaria control and equipment. Provincial antimalaria coordinator Dr. Juvy Paz P. Purino said at least 99 cases of the malaria strain, *falciparum*, were reported last year but no casualty was recorded due to immediate medical intervention. Cecille Colarina, provincial project coordinating officer of the private Global Fund Malaria Component, distributed 1,976 mosquito nets in General Nakar, Patnanungan, Mauban, Burdeos, Panukulan, Infanta, Real, Tayabas, Atimonan and Polilio towns, where malaria was reported to be prevalent. They have also started training eight medical technologists who will be assigned in eight towns.

Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Man killed in holdup

TAYUG, Pangasinan—A man who tried to rob passengers of a Manila-bound bus was killed here early Monday when he and his two companions shot it out with two policemen who were on the bus, police said. A 4-year-old girl was hit by a stray bullet. Police said the Five Star Bus was cruising along the provincial road in Barangay Barangubong here at 2:45 a.m. when three passengers armed with a .38 cal. handgun, a fan knife and tear gas declared a holdup. Two of them ordered the passengers to hand over their bags and wallets to them. But two policemen, identified as PO2 Roldan Suitos and PO2 Darwin Aquino, fought it out and killed one of the suspects. One suspect was arrested while the other fled.

Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

5 killed in smashup

BUTUAN CITY—At least five persons were killed while 23 others suffered injuries when a bus smashed the metal railings along the national highway in Barangay Kumagaskas in Cabadbaran, Agusan del Norte, on Monday. Killed on the spot were retired Army Lt. Romeo Montano, Madore Teten, and Jonalyn Siano. Supt. Samuel Yordan, acting Agusan del Norte police director, said two other victims died in the hospital. Yordan said the Bachelor Bus, which came from Surigao City, might have developed mechanical problem, causing it to hit the railings around 10:45 p.m. But Arturo Montealto, one of the survivors, said the driver, identified Eric Dawa, was trying to overtake another bus.

Franklin Caliguid, PDI Mindanao Bureau

4 slain in ambushes

COTABATO CITY—At least four people, two of them militiamen, were killed in two separate ambuscades in Central Mindanao, the military reported yesterday. Maj. Gen. Agustin Dema-ala, commander of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said the attacks occurred on Sunday. Dema-ala said that in the first incident, which took place in Midsayap, North Cotabato, militiamen Nemesio Dugho and Gorgonio Merescal Jr. were killed. The perpetrators took the victims' firearms, an M-14 rifle and an M-1 rifle. In the second incident, armed men fired at a tricycle in Barangay Lagandang in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, killing two passengers and wounding two others.

Jeoffrey Maitem, PDI Mindanao Bureau

4 men held for rob try

'HINTAY NATIN ANG PULIS!'

BAGUIO CITY—Four men ended up waiting for the police after they were locked inside a building here that they tried to rob on Sunday. A caretaker padlocked the Northern Luzon Publishers and Printers (Norlu) office when he realized that the suspects broke into the building at 12:10 a.m. Sunday. Senior Supt. Isagani Nerez, city police director, said the caretaker immediately reported the break-in to the police. Police said suspects Andy Bumacas, 34, Rodolfo Baday, 23, Eric Dilwas, 39, and James Tumagi, 27, used a screwdriver to open a window to enter the Norlu office on Bokawkan Road.

Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

STUDENT GROUP REPORT

High dropout rate plagues Cordillera

By Desiree Caluza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—In several villages in the Cordillera, students are far fewer than the available school desks and chairs last year.

A report released by the National Union of Students of the Philippines (NUSP) Baguio-Benguet chapter on Monday said an inventory by the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) showed an excess of 17,067 chairs and desks in public elementary schools in Abra, Benguet and Kalinga in 2004.

But Violeta Clemente, supply officer of the regional DepEd, disputed the ACT figures. "They might be referring to chairs damaged or broken [which were included in the inventory]. We still have schools in the Cordillera which lack chairs," she said.

She said the DepEd had yet to complete its inventory of chairs and desks for this school year. The inventory would include damaged and broken chairs and desks, she said.

John Panem, NUSP provincial coordinator, said the excess in chairs and desks could be traced to the declining participation and high dropout rate of students.

"The excess in the number chairs only reflects the economic crisis that families in remote villages are facing. Students would rather help their parents in the farm and earn than go to school," he said.

He said the ACT-Metro Baguio based its figures on school desks and chairs from the records of the Department of Education.

Irene Nabunat, ACT-Metro Baguio coordinator, said that while the number of enrollees increased every year, many of the students drop out during the school year.

She said an ACT survey showed that the participation rate for public elementary schools dropped from 89 percent in school year 1999-2000 to 80.96 percent in 2003-04. For public high schools, it is lower at 43.34 percent.

"This means that more and more children are being deprived of their right to basic education," Nabunat said.

She said the survey also showed that only 68.59 percent of students in the Cordillera finished high school.

Nabunat said the ACT inventory showed that public schools in Baguio City, Mt. Province, Apayao and Ifugao lacked 22,426 desks and chairs.

She said teachers had also complained of inadequate reference materials and teaching instruments, facilities and laboratories.

DepEd records, she said, showed that the Cordillera needed at least 500 more teachers.

Nabunat said Baguio City had the highest teacher-student ratio in the region at 1:62 and the hiring of at least 260 teachers could solve this.

In Cagayan Valley, DepEd officials said 500 new teachers were needed, but they were allowed to hire only 162, said Mario Ramirez, DepEd regional director.

He said they planned to reactivate the 34 integrated schools in the region to accommodate incoming high school students in remote areas.

The construction or rehabilitation of school buildings in the region had been slowed down by the lack of land titles of these schools, he said. *Desiree Caluza and Estanislao Caldez, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

MITCH MAURICIO

GOOD HARVEST
A native of Kadaclan, Mountain Province, dries his harvest that provides income for the family. Most youngsters of the province dream of working overseas to earn more than what they get from farming, which may leave the great rice terraces unattended.

Severe teacher shortage in Central Luzon schools

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Central Luzon has 1,796 "red" and "black" public elementary and high schools this school year.

The color codes, however, do not indicate the school buildings' colors but severe shortage in teachers, classrooms and desks.

According to the Department of Education's basic education information system, a "red" classification either means there is a severe teacher shortage, the one-teacher-per-45-students ratio is exceeded even with double shifting, or more than three students share a seat in two-shift schools.

A "black" classification, on the other hand, shows that a school has no teacher whose salary is paid out of national funds, there are no classrooms at all, or there is not even a seat there.

At least 420 elementary schools and 1,376 high schools have been identified as red and black schools in the region.

At the elementary level, San Jose del Monte City in Bulacan lacks the biggest number of classrooms at 165, DepEd data showed.

Increase

Student population increased following the relocation of settlers along the old Philippine National Railways tracks to give way to the $503-million NorthRail project.

At the high school level, Bulacan lacks 335 classrooms; Pampanga, 264; Nueva Ecija, 189; and Tarlac, 169. Among the cities, San Fernando in Pampanga needs 51 more classrooms.

The DepEd has allotted P79.791 million for the needs of 1,796 schools in Central Luzon this year. Bulacan, Pampanga and San Jose del Monte are getting the biggest funding, data showed.

The Department of Public Works and Highways, on the other hand, received a congressional allotment of P65.649 million this year for school buildings in 20 districts in the regions, a report showed.

Many principals have complained against the practice of DPWH contractors to "delete items," reports received by the INQUIRER said.

They said some of the classrooms built by contractors did not have ceilings, electrical wirings or paint.

Odon Santiago, chief of the DepEd regional physical facilities unit, said these cases were "not too many."

DPWH contractors, he said, justified the deletion of items by citing the standard price of each classroom, at P260,000 each.

The DepEd in Central Luzon has funds this year to hire at least 493 new teachers.

This is less than a third of the 1,752 new teachers projected to be required in the region this 2005, another report showed.

Limited funds

Local governments were filling in the gap, but limited budget allows LGU-hired teachers to be paid P5,000 monthly only, a report from the DepEd planning office said.

In La Union, Ernesto Florendo, secondary school division chief at the DepEd in the Ilocos, has called on the government to increase its yearly budget for public high schools.

"Insufficient laboratory, computers and instructional materials continue to degrade the quality of learning acquired by high school students. The surge in yearly enrollment and the need to hire more competitive teachers aggravate the low scores of students in the region in National Achievement Test," Florendo said.

In Bulacan, Gov. Josefina de la Cruz allotted P15 million for scholarship of poor Bulakeño students.

De la Cruz said the provincial government would continue to support the 400 government scholars studying at the Bulacan State University until they get their degrees. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk, with reports from Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk, and Nemesio de la Cruz, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

American soldiers donate chairs

ZAMBOANGA CITY—After the war games and military exercises, American soldiers are reaching out to schoolchildren and orphans.

Lt. Col. Eric Haider, the new chief of the Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines (JSOTFP) based at the Southern Command headquarters, said they were sharing some resources donated by American friends to selected primary schools and orphanages here.

During Monday's school opening, Haider and 20 other American soldiers trooped to the Southern Command Elementary School, bringing with them boxes of school supplies, children's reading books and Monobloc chairs.

Haider, in his message to the schoolchildren, said they should not take education for granted.

School principal Muslima Jumli said the teachers and pupils were very excited about the donations.

"It's a great help for our pupils. They love children's books with colorful pictures," Jumli said.

Two weeks ago, Haider and Lt. Col. Michael Donnelly, public affairs officer of the JSOTFP based in Camp Aguinaldo, visited the Zamboanga City Orphanage Center in Barangay Talon-talon and spent time playing with the orphans. *Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Journalist's widow tags cop

By Jolene R. Bulambot
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—The wife of slain Pagadian City journalist Edgar Damalerio yesterday broke down as she testified against a former police officer tagged in the killing of her husband in 2002.

Maria Gemma Damalerio, 37, a pharmacist, positively identified PO1 Guillermo Wapille as the man she saw tailing her husband days before he was killed.

Damalerio, who was wearing a black t-shirt to dramatize her call for justice for her husband's death, twice pointed at Wapille in open court as one of the suspects.

Under direct examination, Damalerio corroborated the testimony of the prosecution's eyewitness, Edgar Onggue.

Onggue

Onggue told the court on June 3 that he was with the victim and another witness, Edgar Amoro, when Wapille, wearing a dirty white scarf, shot the journalist.

Amoro, also a prosecution witness, was killed recently.

Damalerio said she knew Onggue because he had volunteered to accompany her husband since May 9, 2002, after learning that the victim had been receiving death threats.

She said that on May 9, she saw Wapille in the vicinity of dxKP radio station where her husband was working as an anchor.

She told the court that she immediately sent a text message to her husband, warning him that she saw a suspicious-looking man casing the front area of the station.

Damalerio said she saw Wapille again on the day her husband was killed on May 13, 2002.

Assisted by acting City Prosecutor Nicholas Sellon, Damalerio narrated that her husband, along with Onggue and Amoro, brought her home sometime at past 4 p.m. of that fateful day.

When her husband and his two companions left, she started sweeping the front area of their house and noticed two men on board a motorcycle approaching.

Motorcycle

It was at this instance that she recognized Wapille, who was riding on the back of a motorcycle driven by an unidentified person, who surveyed the house and immediately left.

Onggue, in his testimony, said the victim received a text message from his wife about the "unusual happening" that occurred in their house, prompting the journalist to go straight home from a press conference.

He said they were not able to reach the house of Damalerio because Edgar, who was driving a jeep, was shot and killed by a man riding on a motorcycle driven by a companion.

He positively identified Wapille as the man who fired several shots at Damalerio with a handgun.

Eastern Visayas public schools hold night classes

By Joey A. Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—Night classes have to be held in public schools to address the lack of classrooms for 900,000 public school students in Eastern Visayas, according to Belen Hipe, planning chief of the Department of Education regional office.

Some teachers also handle two classes in one venue at the same time, Hipe said. Some classes are held in used buildings, barangay halls and even chapels, she said.

She said 398 new classrooms were needed in the elementary level and 1,192 in the secondary level to accommodate the 938,406 enrollees this school year.

Hipe earlier said the region needed 513 new teachers to cover the deficiency in both elementary and secondary levels.

At the Leyte National High School (LNHS), the region's biggest secondary school, officials were forced to use the ground floor of a dilapidated building because of the shortage of classrooms.

"We have no choice but to use the area... we have a growing student population," said Wenifreda Renomeron, LNHS principal.

The school's five-room science laboratory has to be "converted" into a classroom.

Renomeron said the student population in the LNHS went up by 7,000 from 6,400 last year due to increases in private school fees in the city.

With more students, Renomeron said its more than 200 teachers had to handle 50-60 students per class. "This is, of course, way above the ideal ratio of 45 students to a teacher."

Hipe expected at least a two-percent increase in the number of students both in the elementary and secondary levels, most of them transferees from private schools whose parents could no longer afford to pay the tuition.

She said they projected the elementary school enrollment to reach 683,592 from last year's 668,908 pupils enrolled in the region's 3,582 public elementary schools.

US Embassy ...

From page A1

constitutional.

US press attaché Karen Kelly said the embassy had no reaction to what Señeres said was his "interpretation" of remarks made before the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines on May 11 by outgoing US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone.

"The more we react, the more people will believe we have a stake in it, but we don't," said another US Embassy official.

In an interview with the INQUIRER on Tuesday, Señeres said Ricciardone's remarks at the May 11 forum meant that Washington would support any move to "fix" the country's supposed problems if it was done within the framework of the Constitution.

Having thus lost US support, he said, President Macapagal-Arroyo should resign, advising her to "cut and cut cleanly."

Señeres, who resigned as chair of the National Labor Relations Commission after being accused by Ms Arroyo of undermining her administration and seeking US help for her ouster, last month said the country needed a "a new government" and called on the Armed Forces and Philippine National Police to rescue the Filipino people.

Señeres has denied being involved in destabilization plots. He said he did visit Ricciardone at the latter's Forbes Park residence on March 27 but stressed that it was a purely social call.

In the same interview, Señeres said the US envoy had admitted that "something [was] broken and it has to be fixed" but made it clear that only constitutional means should be used to "fix" the problem.

Transcript

Based on the transcript, obtained from the US Embassy website, of Ricciardone's Focap speech and his responses in the open forum, Señeres appears to have focused on Ricciardone's answer to a question about the ambassador being "maliciously linked" to recent destabilization plots against the Arroyo administration and his reported meeting with Señeres.

In his lengthy response, Ricciardone said he could not talk about meetings with individual Filipinos because "we do protect our confidences." He said he met very openly with people and not "clandestinely in the dead of night."

"If I or one of my diplomats, one of my colleagues, meets with a member of the opposition, people sometimes boast about that and they will sometimes suggest that we're supporting them or whatever it is," Ricciardone said.

US policy

But he said it was made clear at such meetings what the US policy was: "We support Philippine democracy, whether in the opposition, whether in the government. That's what we support."

As to what the US attitude was toward political change, Ricciardone said Washington was for it, "change is an important thing in any living, breathing, dynamic political system."

He went on to say that the great thing about democracy was that it had built-in, legal processes for change.

"And if people are frustrated enough and angry enough about the problems in this country that they feel the change has to come about, you've got options. None of them are easy," said Ricciardone.

He mentioned elections, starting with the one scheduled in 2007 and the Constitution that was ratified in 1987.

He noted that a lot of people were frustrated with some of the tenets of the Constitution and were talking about changing it.

"If you choose to change your Constitution between now and [2007], that's fine, do what you think is right," Ricciardone said.

Worst option

"But the worst option I can imagine and the only one we, the United States of America, would actively and strenuously oppose, is extralegal ones: violent overthrow, extralegal overthrow of the government. That, we think, would weaken this country," he said.

He noted that the country had a leader that was chosen by legal processes.

"We, the United States of America, and every other country in the world recognize President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as the lawfully, constitutionally elected leader of this great country of yours. If someone wants to change that, and you want the respect of the world, you'd better do it through your Constitution." he said.

"And that means, you don't get a chance to do that again until—not 2007 in the President's case, but that will be—2010. In 2007, you get to elect a whole new Congress or most of a new Congress and Senate.

"In the meantime, you've got other elections. You've got to be patient with democracy. You've got to work hard. It's boring sometimes. There's no quick fix. There's no magic solution. When you get angry, you can't just go and call a press conference and call for a revolution. It doesn't work. It doesn't work in modern countries," Ricciardone said.

Senate bomb threat forces evacuation

From page A1

said Senate sergeant at arms Jose Balajadia, who told reporters that more than 1,000 people were evacuated from the building following two phone calls about a bomb in the premises.

The threat by the male caller was made as members of the Commission on Appointments were quizzing Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Efren Abu before his official confirmation.

"Maybe the call came from a prankster," Balajadia said.

4th threat

It was the fourth bomb threat against the Senate in the past three years and came during a very busy day.

It disturbed the confirmation hearings of 60 military generals and colonels, including Abu and Lt. Gen. Edilberto Adan.

The bomb threat also came amid rumors of a fresh destabilization plot against the Arroyo administration which is reeling from a "jueteng" investigation implicating members of the First Family and new charges of election cheating against the President based on a wiretapped conversation.

"We were hesitant to get out because we wanted to complete the proceedings, but we have to follow the SOP," said Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, chair of the CA committee on national defense.

It was the last meeting of the CA committees and plenary before Congress adjourns on Friday. Two other CA committees were set to meet in the afternoon to tackle the confirmation of Environment Secretary Michael Defensor and Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes before their formal confirmation by the CA plenary at 2 p.m.

'Jamir'

At about 11:20 a.m., a voice in the public address system asked everyone to "leave the premises calmly and proceed to the open parking area." Within minutes, hundreds of anxious employees poured out of the main entrance of the building.

Senators Biazon, Ralph Recto and Juan Ponce Enrile, Rep. Imee Marcos and 10 other House representatives who are members of the CA, Abu and the generals soon followed and began milling about the parking lot.

Telephone operator Debbie Danao received the first call at 11:10 a.m. The male caller phoned again two minutes later.

"It was a man with a big voice. The guy is not culturally Tagalog, he had an accent," Balajadia told reporters.

"There's a bomb that will explode in the Senate," the first warning said in Filipino.

On his second call, the caller who identified himself as "Jamir" said: "I'm not joking, there's a bomb in the Senate."

An unattended bag in the men's room on the fourth floor also drew suspicion.

Balajadia said Senate security personnel and two bomb-sniffing dogs were immediately dispatched to all floors and the Philippine National Police bomb squad was promptly summoned.

Tighter security

At noon, legislators, Abu and his generals reentered the building.

Balajadia said security at the Senate was already tight but would be tightened even more.

But he said it was proven yesterday that no bomb could be planted in the premises.

Senate President Franklin Drilon did not come down from his sixth-floor office despite urgent calls from Balajadia.

Drilon said he was meeting with the Mexican ambassador when the order to evacuate came. He said he did not move although he asked his guests to leave immediately.

"I was confident it was a prankster and I don't want to give the pleasure of seeing the Senate President scampering out of the building," Drilon said.

Juliet Labog Javellana

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Senders of d best 20 texts as publishd in Tuesday's INQBOX wiL each receiv an *Inquirer Mug! Ü

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METRO

Editor Ester G. Dipasupil

MEGALOTTO 6/45
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TV director shot dead in Makati brawl

By Tarra V. Quismundo

HE ONLY wanted them to stop fighting.

Twenty-seven-year-old television director Luigi Santiago stepped in the middle of a brawl and ended up as the lone fatality in the incident outside a Makati City nightspot before dawn yesterday.

Santiago, director of the weekly occult series "Nginig" aired over ABS-CBN Channel 2, died of a lone gunshot wound below the throat.

Six others were wounded.

Not involved

"He was pacifying them. He was not involved," said Senior Insp. Gary Reyes, chief of the Makati police homicide division.

Santiago and seven others, including a policeman, were hit when one of the brawlers got a gun and started shooting indiscriminately at 4:10 a.m. outside the Venezia bar at the corner of West Drive and Rizal Drive at the Ayala Center.

The shooter, identified as a certain Oliver, managed to flee on board a vehicle, which police said could be a Ford Explorer with license plate XTW 280.

Oliver, who was a frequent guest at Venezia according to bar managers, was described as sporting close-cropped hair, of medium build, fair-skinned, and about 5'6" to 5'7".

Reyes said the bar located beside Glorietta 2 was about to close at about 4 a.m. and guests were walking out when two groups of women started quarreling.

The women's male companions reportedly joined the fray and turned the heated argument into a brawl in front of nearby Luk Yuen restaurant.

That was when Santiago, who was also a customer at the bar, reportedly stepped in and tried to pacify the antagonists.

Police could not say if the TV director knew any of the quarreling parties.

Policemen arrive

Moments later, patrolling policemen, including Senior Insp. Merquiodi Bodanio arrived and tried to intervene.

However, Oliver reportedly walked out of the fight and went to a parked vehicle where he allegedly took out a 9-mm pistol.

Oliver then reportedly started firing indiscriminately.

"He just began firing his gun. He didn't care who was hit," said SPO1 Lewelie Cristobal, case investigator.

The shooter hit Santiago in the neck, Bodanio in the right arm, Althea Arvisa, 21, in the upper left thigh; Maryan Sansano, 24, in her left knee; Venezia disc jockey Arnel Genterrone, 32, in his left hip; Gerald Nicolas, 30, in his left thigh; and businessman Charlieton Yu, 30, in his right foot.

They were all rushed to the Makati Medical Center.

Santiago was declared dead on arrival at the hospital.

Meanwhile, the shooter boarded his vehicle and fled. He is now the object of a manhunt.

Reyes said a witness had given them the surname of the shooter, but the homicide division chief declined to reveal this pending verification of his identity.

"She said the suspect's surname sounded like so and so, but she was not sure," said Reyes.

The police official cited witness statements that said the suspect spoke with an accent.

Reyes added that their hunt for the shooter had taken his men to Ayala Alabang in Muntinlupa City, but refused to comment further.

Santiago was a graduate of the New York University-Tisch School of the Arts.

SANTIAGO

His remains lie at the Santuario de San Antonio Parish in Forbes Park, Makati City.

Mutya ng Pilipinas 20
nas 20
pinas 20
as 200
ng Pilipinas
as 2005
2005

RODEL ROTONI

MUTYA BETS
Candidates vying for this year's Mutya ng Pilipinas crown are presented to media at the poolside of the Diamond Hotel in Manila. The winner will represent the country in the Miss Asia-Pacific pageant to be held in China later this year.

A bite of duck could be bad for one's health

By Christine Gaylican

THE DEPARTMENT of Agriculture has warned the public and restaurant owners about serving Peking ducks that could be infected with the avian flu virus.

"The ongoing Peking Duck Festival at the Eastwood Libis offering a 50 percent discount on Peking duck purchases is an insult to our efforts to protect the country from the entry of bird flu and smuggling. Consumers are at risk," said Agriculture Undersecretary Cesar Drilon in a forum yesterday with officials and members of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce Inc.

Ban not lifted

Drilon reiterated that the agency had not lifted the ban on imported poultry and pork products from China since May 2001.

The ducks make their way to Chinese restaurants through smugglers, tourists or returning residents as part of their personal baggage.

"The bird flu virus can be killed by cooking. However, eating poultry products from infected countries like China means exposing the country to the avian flu virus. It also virtually condones smuggling," he added.

Meat products seized

The agriculture department recently confiscated 23 metric tons of meat products from China, including Peking ducks, quartered chicken legs, pigeons, frozen pork products, and suckling pigs from a Quezon City warehouse. The products are reportedly carriers of the virus that can be transferred to poultry, livestock and even humans, Drilon said.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap said the Bureau of Animal Industry and the National Meat Inspection Service would confiscate all Peking duck and poultry products sold in supermarkets and restaurants coming from China and other infected countries.

Star gaze at this university

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

LEARN more about outer space from this university in Mandaluyong City.

Astronomy classes in the master's level will open on June 20 at the Rizal Technological University, the first school to offer this course in the country, university vice president for academic affairs Jesus Torres said.

"Our objective is to make this course popular," he said. At least 10 students have already enrolled in the new course leading to a Master of Science in Astronomy.

Some of the enrollees are already working for the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa).

The government agency itself worked on the curriculum for the course when its officials approached the university months ago on the possibility of offering an astronomy program on campus. Professors for the subjects will also come from Pagasa.

Some lectures will be held at the university. But students will also be allowed to use the facilities at the Pagasa main office.

Jobs are available for graduates of the course. Pagasa currently needs 400 employees, the city's public information office earlier reported.

Applicants must be a Science or Engineering graduate, but graduates of other courses can also apply and take the required subjects, Torres said.

Those who want to work for all centers can also enroll at the university's speech training program.

Abu's weak leadership

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

THERE are reports that some sectors in the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) are restive and might stage a mutiny or coup.

The restiveness is a reflection of the present AFP leadership.

Gen. Efren Abu, AFP chief of staff, no longer has the respect of the majority of the officer corps and rank and file.

He's been tainted with accusations that he overpriced the sidewalk renovation in Camp Aguinaldo and the unauthorized construction of the military rest house in Boracay.

Even if those accusations are not true, the perception among his subordinate officers and enlisted personnel is that he is guilty as hell.

The honorable way out for him is to retire ahead of his scheduled swan song on June 23. There is no other way.

Abu is probably one of two AFP chiefs who are unpopular among the officers and rank and file members.

The AFP chief of staff's unpopularity stems from the perception—right or wrong—that he is corrupt.

The other unpopular chief of staff was Lisandro Abadia who until now is being hounded by corruption charges.

* * *

Commissioner Bert Lina may have resigned from his brokerage firms when he got appointed as chief of the Bureau of Customs, but the perception is that his companies pose unfair competition to other brokerage companies.

Lina's former firms are reportedly cornering the brokerage market at the customs bureau.

And a certain Alvarez, reportedly a former Lina subordinate, is allegedly lording it over other brokerage firms.

Lina's former companies are 2100 Customs Brokers Inc.; Airfreight 2100, Inc.; U-Freight Philippines; U-Ocean Inc.; Linaheim Bonded Trading Warehousing based in Laguna; and LGC Logistics Inc.

This is not to mention Federal Express or Fedex, a multinational cargo company where he was chair and president.

The 2100 Customs Brokers Inc. has reportedly won big importer-clients such as Pricemart, Uniwide, Procter and Gamble and Philip Morris.

There is talk that Alvarez is planning to set up a bonded warehouse at the Cebu Port.

This has led to speculation about the reason for a customs memorandum circular banning customs intelligence agents from inspecting incoming cargoes suspected of being loaded with contraband.

Only the collector of the port can make the inspection.

The speculation is that Lina's former brokerage firms have bonded warehouses within the jurisdiction of the Port of Cebu and at the Manila International Container Port.

If that's not conflict of interest, I don't know what is.

* * *

Congratulations to Secretaries Angelo Reyes of Interior and Michael Defensor of Environment and Natural Resources for getting the approval of the Commision on Appointments.

It was a tough hurdle for the two Cabinet members.

However, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzales is being given a hard time—as were Reyes and Defensor before him—by the commission.

I'm sure that despite the opposition from some of his critics, Gonzales will eventually get the commission's nod.

Gonzales would make a good justice secretary because he was a fighter when he was the chief of the defunct Tanodbayan.

Remember the "Dear Raul" letters from some Supreme Court justices that Gonzales exposed pressuring him to go easy on some government officials being investigated by the Tanodbayan?

Ancient shards turned over to Museum

By Tina G. Santos

ENVIRONMENT advocates yesterday turned over to the National Museum several pieces of ceramic shards they found inside the contested Arroceros Forest Park in Manila last Sunday.

According to Fr. Robert Reyes, who had led a team of amateur archeologists in conducting a survey of the area, the shards were submitted to the museum for proper identification.

Apart from the 250 pieces of ceramic shards, which Reyes believes belonged to Chinese settlers who set up a colony in Arroceros in the 16th century, the activitist priest also handed over pieces of metal (rust-covered six-inch nails) and an unidentified piece of bone.

In a letter addressed to National Museum Director Corazon Alvina, Reyes urged musuem officials to look seriously into the issue of disturbing a valuable site.

"The workers digging the trenches do not have any archeological sensitivity, interest or concern. But they must not be blamed because they do not have the slightest idea of archeology and the value of historical and cultural artifacts, much less that of trees," Reyes said.

The National Museum, which had declared the park an archeological site in April 2003, earlier told the city government to stop digging operations for a proposed teachers' building in Arroceros because the park could still turn up a cache of artifacts.

Meanwhile, city legal officer Melchor Monsod accused Winner Foundation, the group taking care of the park, of using the National Museum "in a frantic bid to block at all costs" the construction of the teachers' building at the site.

But Regina Paterno, president of Winner, argued that they were not using the National Museum for selfish motives. "We are using the rule of law—the law that protects the environment and our cultural heritage," she said.

Taguig inmate killed

By Tarra V. Quismundo

DETENTION proved to be a death sentence.

A suspect newly detained at the Taguig City Jail died at noon Tuesday in the hands of his fellow detainees.

Rommel de Guzman, 33, was allegedly mauled inside detention cell 3, a facility near the Taguig City Hall on Gen. Luna Street, Barangay Tuktukan.

The Taguig Public Information Office said De Guzman of Barangay Tuktukan was detained Saturday for car theft.

At about noon on Tuesday, he was found barely alive after sustaining bruises and wounds all over his body. He was rushed to nearby Cruz-Rabe Hospital across City Hall, where he died upon arrival.

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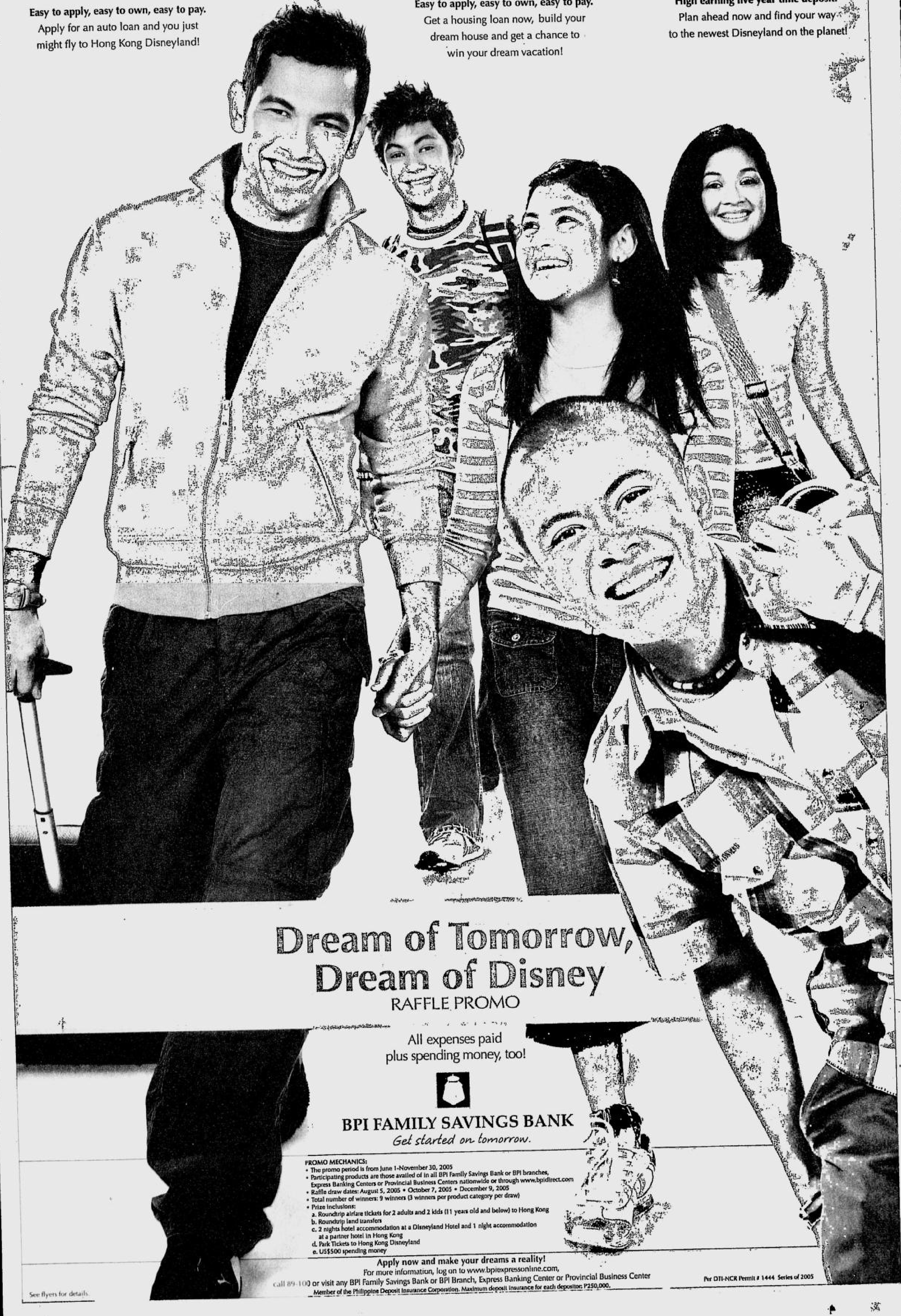

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Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres

SPORTS TV

Compiled by L. Mangulat

BILLIARDS: San Miguel Asian 9-Ball Tour; 4 p.m. (r); STAR Sports—Take another look at one of the semifinal matches in Manila.

GOLF: Official 2002 US Open Film; 7 p.m.; ESPN—Take a look back at the best highlights three years ago.

Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

Unification top priority of new BAP head Lina

By Francis Ochoa

UNDAUNTED by the blows dealt its way, the Basketball Association of the Philippines went about proving it is still in business and installed former Interior Secretary Joey Lina as president of the beleaguered national sports association yesterday.

Lina replaces Tiny Literal, the oft-criticized BAP chief who was elevated to the position of BAP chair. His first order of the day is to seal the cracks in the country's basketball infrastructure.

"I'm just here to help," Lina told the INQUIRER.

Lina's ascension to the top BAP post comes at the heels of a suspension slapped on it by the Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) for reneging on an earlier agreement forged by a powerful basketball committee that is now making high-profile moves to acquire legitimacy by seeking the recognition of the sport's international federation (Fiba).

The former senator and Laguna governor deftly skirted the issue of attempting to have the suspension lifted, but hinted that it is one of the priorities of his administration.

"It's too early to spell out the specifics," Lina explained. "But we're moving toward the general direction of unifying [the basketball stakeholders]."

Lina is expected to continue talks with POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, who initiated the suspension proceedings against the BAP. Cojuangco is currently out of the country.

"I've already talked [to Cojuangco] even before he left," Lina said, refusing to reveal the specifics of that meeting. "All I can say is that it was a positive conversation."

POC spokesperson Joey Romasanta confirmed that the two had spoken and that Lina had initially "offered a helping hand" to solve the basketball row.

"But I do not know what else they talked about," said Romasanta, who added that Cojuangco still has to be informed of Lina's election.

However, Romasanta said Cojuangco will likely not question the election since "it is something that is internal to the BAP. They can do whatever they want but the fact still is they remain suspended by the POC."

Lina has had a long relationship with the current BAP administration. While serving as Interior secretary, the former senator forged a memorandum of agreement with the basketball NSA calling for the transfer of hoop technology to remote areas in the province.

"This is the reason why Secretary Lina has always been a part of the BAP family, precisely because of that DILG-BAP pact," said BAP executive vice president Christian Tan. "The agreement with the DILG exists up to this day through the various basketball clinics that the BAP is conducting via its officiating arm—the Basketball Referees Commission (Barecom)."

Meanwhile, in a letter sent to the BAP office, Fiba-Asia Secretary General Yeoh Choo Hock expressed his "appreciation for a successful [hosting of the Champions Cup].

"On behalf of Fiba-Asia, I wish to thank you and your committee members for all the hard work and sacrifice rendered for the success of the FedEx 16th Fiba-Asia Champions Cup in Manila, Philippines from May 29 to June 5," wrote Dato.

LINA: "I'm here to help."

MVP CUP
ASIA EUROPE
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PHILIPPINE Badminton Association vice president Edgar Aglipay (Ret.) presents an IBF racquet to PLDT chair Manny V. Pangilinan (middle), in whose honor the MVP Cup is being staged, during yesterday's launch. Looking on is Boy Martirez, president of Smart Communications.

RUDY ESPERAS

SMA Simply On

Badminton giants joining MVP Cup

By Jong Arcano
INQUIRER Badminton editor

ONE man's passion for feathers and strings has spawned a showdown of giants that will certainly put the country in the international badminton map.

The biggest names in the sport of badminton, including Olympic champion Taufik Hidayat of Indonesia, world champions Lin Dan and Zhang Ning of China and England's Nathan Robertson and Gail Emms, are coming to Manila next month for a unique intercontinental team competition.

An all-star lineup of 10 players each from Asia and Europe have been formed by their respective mother organizations to dispute the MVP Cup, a blockbuster event being staged in honor of Manuel V. Pangilinan, himself a badminton buff who is head honcho of the sponsoring Smart Communications and its parent company Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company (PLDT).

The MVP Cup, slated on July 12-14 at the Philsports Arena in Pasig, is expected to draw global attention through its wide mileage being arranged by the International Management Group.

"This tournament exposes us to standards we cannot see and hopefully will inspire our national team members to become world-class athletes," said Pangilinan in yesterday's launch at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel.

Playing for Team Asia are Lin Dan of China and Taufik Hidayat of Indonesia in men's singles, Zhang Ning of China and Seo Yoon Hee of Korea in ladies singles, Chan Choon Ming and Koo Kian Keat of Malaysia in men's doubles, Sathinee Chankrachangwong/Saralee Thungthongkam of Thailand in ladies doubles and the Philippines' Kennivic and Kennie Asuncion for the mixed doubles.

Team Europe will be represented by Bjoern Joppien of Germany and Anders Boesen of Denmark in men's singles. Mia Audina Tjiptawan of Netherlands and Pi Hongyan of France will be fielded in the ladies singles while Nathan Robertson and Robert Blair of England are taking the men's doubles challenge. Ladies Doubles bets are Tjiptawan and Yao Jie of Netherlands while the world No. 1 mixed doubles tandem of Robertson and Gail Emms of England will be a formidable foe for the Asuncions.

Aside from the MVP Cup, the winning team will share a $50,000 bonanza while the losing side settles for $30,000.

Also gracing yesterday's launch were Philippine Badminton Association vice president Gen. Edgardo Aglipay (Ret.), James White of IMG, Boy Martires, Ricky Isla and Julie Carceller of Smart.

FedEx battles Purefoods; Red Bull meets Ginebra

GAMES TODAY (*Ynares Center*)
4:45 p.m.—FedEx vs Purefoods
7:15 p.m.—Red Bull vs Barangay Ginebra

FEDEX and Red Bull Barako will touch off their campaign in the wildcard phase against their lower-seeded opponents in the 2005 Gran Matador PBA Fiesta Conference today at the Ynares Center in Antipolo City.

Finishing fifth in the classification round, the Express collide with the eighth-ranked Purefoods TJ Hotdogs in a best-of-three series, the same test the Barako have to go through against the Barangay Ginebra Kings in the other game.

The Express share an identical 9-9 record together with the Barako but ended up with a superior quotient. The defending champion Kings won eight of their 18 elimination-round games to secure the seventh seeding.

The Express and the TJ Hotdogs split their first two meetings but FedEx certainly has the edge in the series as far as cohesion and import matchup are concerned.

While coach Bong Ramos relies solidly on the reliable Anthony Miller, the TJ Hotdogs will parade a new import, whom coach Ryan Gregorio hopes to make an immediate impact in the playoffs.

Markus Melvin, a 6-foot-8 enforcer from North Carolina State University, replaced the 7-foot Lorenzo Coleman following the Hotdogs' mediocre stint in the eliminations.

"He's quick and energetic. He'll definitely be a big plus for us," said Gregorio.

The 23-year-old Melvin is fresh from a stint in Lebanon but he wasn't around when a Lebanese club team went home with a third-place finish during the recently concluded Fiba-Asia Champions Cup at the Araneta Coliseum.

Renren Rituálo, who spearheaded RP-San Miguel to fifth place in the Fiba-sanctioned tournament, will again be the focus of the Purefoods defense while the Hotdogs keep an eye on Miller inside the paint.

The Kings also have a new reinforcement whom they tested in a losing effort against the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals at the close of the classification round. Hiram Fuller gave the Phone Pals a scare and it will be no different when he clashes with Red Bull's Earl Barron in the middle.

The Barako swept the Kings in two games during the eliminations, a run coach Yeng Guiao hopes to sustain against the defending champions.

In capturing the crown the last two conferences, the Kings showed they can pour it all out in the playoffs even after a mediocre start to the tournament. *June Navarro*

Lomibao chalks up victory

WOMAN Fide Master Sheerie Joy Lomibao crushed the defenses of Woman National Master Sherily Cua in their Caro Kann duel yesterday to stay in the hunt for a second straight national title.

Lomibao's 54-move win pushed her total to 6.5 points after nine rounds in the Women's Standard Chess Grand Finals at the Sunflower Hotel in Tagaytay City.

She only trailed solo leader Shercila Cua, who upped her total to 7.5 after halving the point with WNM Loreshyl Cuizon.

Enerose Magno occupied the third slot with 6.0 points. Magno celebrated her 19th birthday by beating Kimberly Jane Cunanan in 49 moves of Sicilian Dragon.

A stint in the Southeast Asian Games could be a fitting belated birthday present.

The top five finishers in the tournament sanctioned by the National Chess Federation of the Philippines will compose the women's national standard chess team set to compete in this year's biennial meet.

Nolte rules Baragatan chess

NATIONAL Master Rolando Nolte deftly handled the black pieces to beat International Master Barlo Nadera in the ninth and final round and rule the Baragatan Open Chess Festival at the provincial capitol in Puerto Princesa City.

Nolte, who took the win after 36 moves of a Queen's Indian, finished with 8.0 points and pocketed the P50,000 top prize.

International Masters Luis Chiong IV had a chance to catch Nolte but was held to a draw by fellow IM Emmanuel Senador after 26 moves of a Pirc.

Chiong finished solo second with 7.5 points while Senador shared third to fifth places with NM Mirabeau Maga and Allan Macala at 7.0.

Rounding up the top 10 were Randy Segarra, Verth Alora, Tribe Olmedo, Edmundo Gatus and Nadera.

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NBC names ex-pros Nicdao, Vilar players of the month

FORMER PBA player Christian Nicdao and Leo Vilar have been named "players of the month" (PoM) in the ongoing Panasonic-NBC national basketball championship.

The 6-foot-5 Nicdao, who played for Mobiline in the PBA and Laguna Spring in NBC's first season, averaged 13 points, 8.80 rebounds, 1.4 assists, 1 steal and a league-best 3 blocks while shooting 42 percent from the field as he powered Mayor Reynaldo Parojinog's Ozamiz Cotta to five straight victories in the Southern Conference.

Nicdao scored the wining basket in the Cotta's victory over Valencia Golden Harvest on May 1. In that game, Nicdao shot 15 points, grabbed a season-high 22 boards and collected four blocks, four steals and an assist in a foul-plagued 29 minutes of action.

Nicdao's brilliant showing easily made him the Southern Conference's PoM.

Sweet-shooting Vilar of Forward Taguig was named PoM in the Northern Conference, where his team carries a 3-1 record.

The 6-foot-3 Vilar averaged 17 points, 5.67 rebounds, one assist, two steals and 1.33 blocks in four games.

Vilar tallied 22 points against Laguna Spring, 10 against the Parañaque Jets and 19 against the Cavite Insurers.

Vilar's all-around performance has helped Mayor Freddie Tinga's Taguig cagers emerged as a strong contender in the Northern Conference of the tourney supported by Panasonic, Sulpicio Lines, Cebu Pacific, Philtranco, Spring Cooking Oil, Molten, Accel, Sunbolt, Nature's Spring, Far Eastern Insurance, Skygo Motorycles, Sirlitz Solutions Provider, Hapee Toothpaste, Dewfoan Industries, Ping Ping Lechon, Rought Rider Jeans, Bayview Park Hotel and Holiday Plaza-Cebu.

Games in the NBC are aired over NBN 4 at 4 p.m. every Sunday and on Prime Channel at 2 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. daily.

Montaña, Welcoat start PBL Unity Cup title tiff

NBA CELEBRITY MADNESS: Luke Walton (right) of the LA Lakers and Team Walton and Dwight Howard of the Orlando Magic and Team Howard guard each other during the NBA Madness Basketball Celebrity Challenge recently. Team Howard won, 41-40.

EXPECT another long battle when Montaña Pawnshop and Welcoat Paints dispute the PBL Unity Cup starting today.

GAMES TODAY
(Cuneta Astrodome)
2 p.m.—Granny Goose vs Magnolia
4 p.m.—Welcoat vs Montaña

Fairly even in talent, experience and depth, their coaches agreed that it could be another long-drawn championship series when Montaña and Welcoat battle in Game 1 of their best-of-five contest at 4 p.m. at the Cuneta Astrodome.

"We're going for back-to-back titles, but the road is not going to be easy for us," admitted coach Robert Sison, whose Jewels bagged the Open championship by outclassing the Paintmasters in a deciding Game 5.

"It might be a long series again, possibly another five games," predicted mentor Caloy Garcia after Welcoat sealed its fourth straight finals appearance.

Magnolia Ice Cream, which ended its title defense after losing to Welcoat in the semifinals, will gun for third place in a knockout match against Granny Goose at 2 p.m.

Montaña proved that it's still the league's toughest team after dominating the entire conference. With burly Jon Dan Salvador and streak-shooter Alex Compton fueling the offense, the Jewels lost only twice in 10 games during the elimination.

But more than the talented roster—which includes veterans Froilan Baguion, Eric dela Cuesta, Ariel Capus and Reed Juntilla—Sison noted that team work has been the winning factor for the Jewels.

"The team has shown trust; we always believe in each other," he said.

Garcia observed, however, that the Jewels looked vulnerable now compared with last conference's championship run.

"They're lacking an Al Magpayo so we now have the height advantage," said Garcia of the Jewels' starting forward, who was sidelined after breaking his forearm bones early in the conference.

Garcia is also glad that his main man Anthony Washington is back in his old unstoppable self.

Washington, who couldn't find his offensive groove in the semifinals, delivered 20 points and 13 rebounds to power Welcoat past Magnolia in a do-or-die match, 70-67, last Tuesday.

Leo Najorda, Eugene Tan, Jojo Tangkay and Marvin Ortiguerra have also been among Welcoat's key players.

The Jewels wrapped up their semifinal series against Granny Goose much earlier, giving them a four-day break.

Montaña and Welcoat split their meetings this conference. The Jewels won the first encounter, 88-86, in overtime, with Baguion nailing the game-winning shot. But the Paintmasters avenged their loss behind Washington, 81-74. *Jasmine W. Payo*

Ali appeals to DepEd

WITH the welfare of thousands of student athletes in mind, Manila Sports Council (MASCO) chair Arnold "Ali" Atienza yesterday appealed to both the Department of Education (DepEd) and Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) not to relegate school sports and physical education.

According to Atienza, the DepEd has started implementing its own directive dated August 19, 2004, which states that the positions of PE teachers will be treated by the DepEd as excess positions with the abolition of the Bureau of Physical Education and School Sports (BPESS).

Atienza bared that the present positions of PE teachers assigned at the national, regional and division level will subsequently be converted and reclassified to another position.

This move by the DepEd-prompted Atienza to encourage the Department's further study of the directive.

Monica Publishing stays in contention

MONICA Publishing booked its first win with a hard-earned victory over the LLQC Trogs, 92-76, last Sunday to stay alive in the 4th Burlington Friendship Cup being held weekly at the Phil Buddhacare Academy in Quezon City.

Alfredo Bayog, Roberto Barrera Jr., Mario Escuadro and Emmanuel Liad combined for 49 points to lead Monica Publishing, publisher of Abante and Abante Tonite, in subduing the Trogs of La Loma which is being supported by Ping-Ping Lechon.

The Monica squad, managed by Israel Sanchez and Jeorge Punzalan, can assure itself of a quarterfinals berth if they beat GNC on Sunday.

In the other games, Phil Star, Chloe Lighting and Wilcon Builders notched their 4th straight triumph to remain on top of the standings of the league backed by Memory Magic, Jimac and Accel. Phil Star outclassed PRC, 102-75, Chloe nipped LA Gear, 90-75, and Wilcon routed Shocks XT, 133-71.

In the fifth match GNC demolished Memory Magic, 90-70, behind the 25 points of Reneboy Banzali and the 22 markers of playing coach Bong de la Cruz.

In the Bio-Fresh Socks ladies free throw shooting contest Phil Star and GNC beat their counterparts from PRC and M Magic to tie for first place in the side event with 4-0 slates. Other winners last Sunday were Monica, LA Gear and Shocks XT.

Burlington Cup is a special project of Teamsports, a division of Total Events and Athlete Management (TEAM) Inc. for Burlington Industries Phils. Inc., maker of Burlington, Puma, Bally, Camp, Slazenger and Baleno socks.

Lagura captures 10-under crown

TOP seed Erika Lagura blasted Matthew Sicat, 6-0, 6-0, yesterday to pocket the unisex 10-under title in the MTC National Age Group Tennis Championships at the Mandaluyong Tennis Center outdoor court, In the girls division, unranked Joana Pena defeated Samantha Coyluto, 6-3, 6-1, to join top seeds Zhane Quitara, JV Custodio and Alyssa Mendoza in the 14-under semifinals. Advancing to the next round of the 12-under division were unseeded Erika Lagura, who outclassed Joana Pena, 6-0, 6-1, and Samantha Coyluto, who demolished Kiana Gacias, 6-0, 6-0. Boys' 16-under top seed Leyan Moncera edged Jeffrey Calcita, 6-4, 7-6 (4), No. 2 Mark Balce nipped Homer Perez, 6-2, 6-3, and Mervin Serito beat Juan Regis, 6-2, 7-6 (2), to enter the semis.

Peñalosa-Hurtado US fight off again?

FILIPINO ex-WBC champ Gerry Peñalosa's next fight took a turn for the worse yesterday when his scheduled foe on June 10, Reynaldo Hurtado of Colombia, apparently decided to accept a fight against another opponent. Hurtado was originally scheduled to face Peñalosa earlier, but reportedly backed out from the fight at the weigh-in. Peñalosa offered half of his purse to be added to Hurtado's purse just for the fight to push through, but the effort did not pay off. Then, days later, Peñalosa versus Hurtado was again on the news, with a new date on June 10 to be held at the National Guard Armory in Lynn, USA. A source from the United States said Hurtado was to fight Mauricio Martinez (WBO No. 1/WBA No. 2/WBC No. 6) yesterday at the Sycuan Resort Casino in El Cajon, California. *Salven L. Lagumbay*

Tigresses shoot for semis

GAMES TODAY *(Rizal Memorial Coliseum)*
3 p.m. —La Salle vs FEU
5 p.m.— Lyceum vs UST

UNIVERSITY of Santo Tomas tries to formalize its entry to the semifinal round of the 2005 Shakey's V-League first conference when it takes on winless Lyceum while La Salle eyes its eighth straight victory against lowly Far Eastern U at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum today.

The Tigresses, who ruled the inaugural staging of this Shakey's Pizza-sponsored event last year, are currently in third place with a 4-3 card and are raring to join the Lady Archers and the San Sebastian Lady Stags (6-1) into the semifinal round. Gametime is at 5 p.m.

But while UST is fancied to take a romp over Lyceum, out of the semis race with no win to show in eight starts, La Salle is expected to encounter stiff resistance from FEU, out to keep its flickering semis hopes alive with a sweep of its last three games.

At 1-6, the Lady Tams need to win three more and hope that Ateneo (4-4) and UST drop their remaining games to force at least a tie for the last semis berth.

But with the way the Lady Archers are playing, the FEU spikers would need to come up with a superb game to stop the Taft-based squad in their 3 p.m. match. The event is backed by Accel, Mikasa, IBC 13 and Jemah Television. Highlights of today's matches will be aired tomorrow on IBC-13 starting at 7 p.m., according to the organizing Sports Vision Management Group Inc.

CEREMONIAL SERVE: Crispin Chua (left), Starpaper T.T. Club president, and Angel Ngu (Fil-Chinese Amateur Athletic Federation vice president) do the ceremonial serve of the 4th Filipino-Chinese Friendship Table Tennis Invitational Cup. Looking on are (from left) Rachel Ramos, Seetian Salvador, Joey Sy, Charlie Lim and Philip Uy.

SPORTSWATCH

Foreign, local bets test Carmona track

FOREIGN and local participants will have the chance to get a feel of the challenging track design in the free open practice today in the kickoff leg of the 2005 Asian Open Karting Championship at the Carmona Circuit Philippines. The practice will give them enough time to adjust their kart set-up for tomorrow's crucial qualifying time trials of this FIA-CIK event sanctioned by the Automobile Association of the Philippines (AAP) and sponsored by Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corporation, Denso Iridium Power, Bridgestone, Vivere Suite Hotel, Palmer Asia and supported by Addict Mobile, DMCI Homes, Eastway Motorcycle Racing, Aeromed and Aviva Insurance. Focus will be on reigning Asian Karting Queen Michelle Bumgarner and Karter of the Year Matteo Guidicelli to deliver the top plums for the Philippines.

YOUNG CHAMP: Nicholas James "Nicky" Dy-Buncio, 9, topped the Intermediate Group II-A class of the recent Wack Wack Golf and Country Club 40th Summer Youth Golf Tournament. He has been playing golf for six years and uses the Pro-Line Impreza golf set.

Jao posts another superbikes sweep

DEFENDING champion Jolet Jao left his rivals eating dust in Rounds 3 and 4 of the 2005 Shell Advance Superbikes Series at the Batangas Racing Circuit in Barangay Maligaya, Rosario, Batangas. Riding his reliable Kawasaki, Jao hit a fastest lap time of 1:45.723 on the third lap en route to a runaway victory. He clocked 15:57.651 in the seven lap race for a 15-second lead over Benjo Mendoza of Speedeffex in the event sanctioned by the National Motorcycle Sports and Safety Association and sponsored by Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corporation, Toyota Motors Phils., Aeromed, Kilton Motors, Denso and MOF Company. Randy Ortiz copped third.

RAFFLE WINNER: Golfer George Chiongbian III (second from left) receives a P100,000 check from Diageo Philippines on-trade accounts manager Melinda Diotay as one of the two grand prize winners of the recent Johnnie Walker Classic raffle promo.

Sportshouse Badminton Cup slated

REGISTRATION is now going on for the 2005 Sportshouse Corporate and Celebrity Cup badminton tournament slated July 18-24 at Club 650 and SM Megamall Atrium. Events on tap are men's and ladies' doubles 21 to 34 years old, 35 and above and open mixed doubles divisions. Deadline of entries is on June 27. Players may contact Mon Lindo at 0917-5289090 and 899-8920 and Tad Abello at 8120887 or send an e-mail to teampowerplay@yahoo.com.

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BINAY CUP WINNER: Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay congratulates horse owner David Lee following the victory of his prized galloper Empire King in the recent Mayor Binay Cup at the Santa Ana Park. With them are Dra. Elenita Binay, granddaughter Anya and grandson Boogie, PRCI president Solomon Cua and Philracom chair Jaime Dilag.

Araneta hosts NCA 7-Cock finals

FIERCE action continues today as the premiere National Cockers Association (NCA) presents the championship round of its 7-cock derby at the air-conditioned Araneta Coliseum. Among those gunning for the title are BST Sundance Binangonan of Boy Torres and Rep. Ronnie Puno, St. Joseph Joke Joke Joke of Mayor Nene Aguilar, Jaen Col VGB of Ellan Nagano, PEBR Complexor 3000 of Pol Estrellado, Paniqui June 26, WTJ Makati June 8 and Lucky Rin II Firefly Binangonan. Meanwhile, about 75 local and international cockers and breeders have committed to join the second leg of the "NCA 2005 World Slasher Cup 8-Cock Championship Derby" on June 14, 16 and 18.

Spencer 4-cock derby June 11

AFTER the successful grand opening derby last night, another big- time event billed as "Spencer 4-Cock Derby" sizzles at the Makati Coliseum on Saturday, June 11. To host the event is well-known sportsman William Co, who requests participants to come early for a free buffet dinner. Submission of weights is tomorrow from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Makati Coliseum office, 31 Mascardo St., Barangay Singkamas, Makati City. Interested parties may all 896-3545 or 895-6475 for details. Last night's 87-fight program was witnessed by an overflow crowd, but no complete results were available at press time.

Spurs vs Pistons: Not a sexy affair

But NBA Finals a treat for purists

SAN ANTONIO—The NBA Finals will be more about substance than style, more about matchups than minutiae.

Neither the Detroit Pistons nor the San Antonio Spurs are all that sexy on the surface, but both are a sight to behold for basketball purists. And if one looks deep enough and factors in a few special subplots, there might just be that little extra something for the masses.

One is the defending champion. The other was the reigning titlist a year ago.

The only superstar in the series, Tim Duncan, seems dull but is quietly charismatic. The coaches, Detroit's Larry Brown and San Antonio's Gregg Popovich, are such good friends that "Pop" was the best man at the wedding of "LB." They speak on the phone nearly every day.

Both teams have made defense and team play their calling cards. Neither has a player who will make your jaw drop.

But for those who need a little sex appeal to get interested, at least there's sultry actress Eva Longoria, the current girlfriend of San Antonio point guard Tony Parker.

You've got Detroit's Rasheed Wallace with his foul mouth and his championship belt, and San Antonio's Manu Ginobili with his South American flair and his Olympic gold medal.

"I think you're going to see another great series," Detroit's Chauncey Billups said after the Pistons defeated the Miami Heat in Game 7 of the Eastern Conference finals to earn the right to face the well-rested Spurs. "It's going to be a tough challenge. You know, I just can't wait, man, I can't wait."

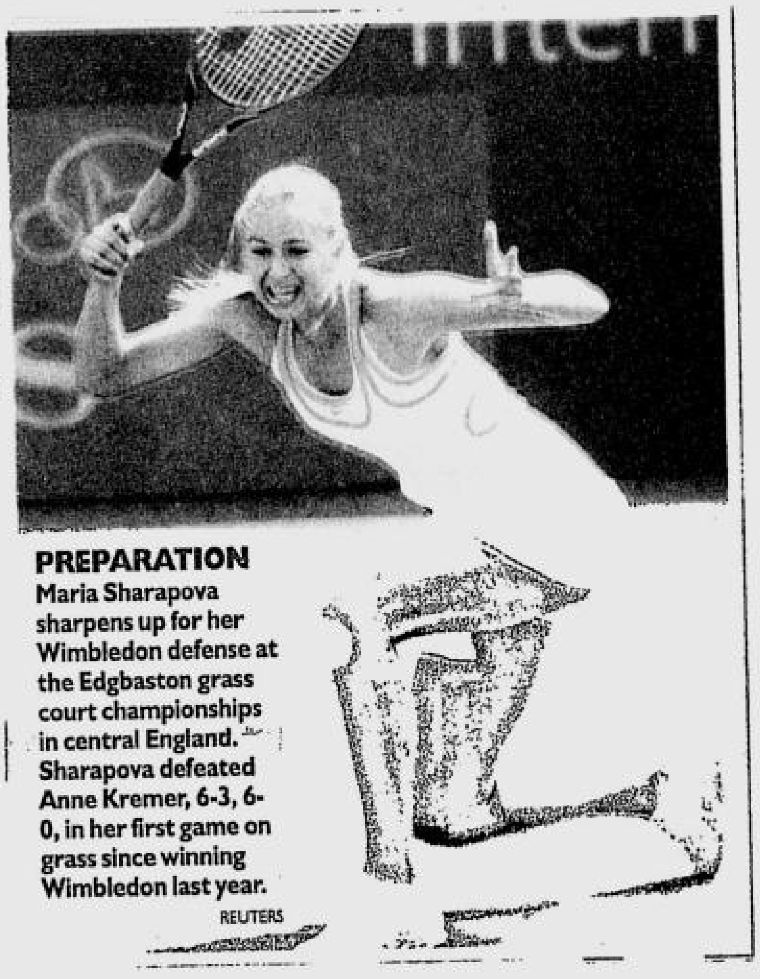
Game 1 is Thursday night, and Game 2 is Sunday. The series then shifts northward for Games 3, 4 and 5.

All subplots aside, it shapes up as a fair match—maybe even the kind of series that will last seven games, something that hasn't happened in the NBA Finals since 1994.

San Antonio has been waiting around since finishing off the Phoenix Suns last Wednesday night, and the Spurs finally got to go through a practice Tuesday knowing exactly who stands in the way of them winning their third championship in seven years.

That team, Detroit, is a formidable obstacle.

"You know, we won the championship last year and people still didn't give us that much of a chance in this series (against Miami)," Billups said. "I think our balance is what inevitably hurt them and beat them." *AP*



PREPARATION
Maria Sharapova sharpens up for her Wimbledon defense at the Edgbaston grass court championships in central England. Sharapova defeated Anne Kremer, 6-3, 6-0, in her first game on grass since winning Wimbledon last year.
REUTERS

Alabang rules WGAP second leg

ALABANG Country Club sizzled at its home course by winning two of the three divisions disputed in the second leg of the 2005 Women's Golf Association of the Philippines Circuit recently.

Alabang captured the Class B and Class C at the expense of Sta. Elena titles then posted a strong third place finish in Class A for a dominating performance in the 18-hole event.

Lolit Arguelles scored 39 points, Videlyn Torralba had 36, Eden Hamilton 34 and Vivian Chua 32 for Alabang's Class B team which beat Sta. Elena by nine with Royal Northwoods placing third at 130.

The Class C also went to Alabang through the efforts of Ann Hagedorn (34), Lydia Cailao (32), Ofelia Carlos (31) and Maria Brumann (28). Sta. Elena placed a far second at 116.

Sta. Elena, however, claimed the big award when it topped Class A by five points over Manila Southwoods, 131-126, and Alabang third at 123.

The next leg is set at the Manila Golf Club on June 6, 10 and 13.

Song-Tumiwa tops Limestone Tee

KOREAN expatriate Pil Bae Song and Samuel Tumiwa turned in the best two-day score to capture the overall trophy in the recently-concluded eighth edition of the Limestone Tee, the member-guest tournament of the Eastridge Golf Club in Binangonan, Rizal.

Pil and Tumiwa showed up a field of 200 teams that played the net aggregate on the first day and the better-ball play on the second day.

Sharing the limelight were division champions Patrocinio Tan and Dennis Rodriguez in Group I, Ardel de Guzman and Mar de Guzman in Group II, Federico Galiste and Nilo Mercado in Group III and William Ang and Guillermo Nocom in Group IV.

The big winners in the raffle were Francis Juan (Ford Ranger) and Luis Que (Ford Lynx).

A towering defense for E.T.

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

WHAT is the main duty of an athlete?

A piece of cake.

To win, what else?

How about a coach's main job?

Same. To make his team/ward win, what else?

I say these again to you in the wake of this current brouhaha in chess.

Seemingly, several chess players are trying to bamboozle our chess officials. I can see them trying to force their way into an area that is supposedly off limits to them.

Aren't officials supposed to have the last say always?

Players, athletes if you will, are free to express their sentiments. They can argue their point all the way to Mendiola. But at the end of the day, though, the word of the officials should prevail over that of the players'.

Alas, that seems to be not happening these days on the chess front.

Suddenly, it seems it's become the other way around: Players do not just like to win. Nowadays, they also want to seem to dictate the rules on how a tournament is to be run.

What's happening? What has become of our chess officials?

And I thought Peping Cojuangco has shown the way: In this wild and wooly sporting world, the leaders should lead and not be led by those whom they are supposed to lead.

I say players can have their way if officials are weak.

I say officials should have their way at all times, or they are not worthy of the calling "official."

The bone of contention is a very ticklish matter: The revolting players don't want Grandmaster Eugene Torre to be included outright into the team bound for the Manila SEA Games in November.

There's but only one reason to that: Man's nature to be envious of things, to be jealous about the achievement of our neighbors—even our friends, at times.

I am not surprised anymore to learn about such things. Such is life that you will run smack into all kinds of shocks as you walk along the boulevard of your dreams. The trick is, learn the wisdom to always come to terms with reality.

This world is peopled by both the bad and the nice that, if you can't reconcile yourself with both fact and fiction, you will have a life as complex as the pink-laden railings of the Metro Manila traffic scheme by Bayani Fernando.

Thus, I don't find it strange anymore that some people can still think ill of Eugene Torre. They can so easily dismiss the guy, conveniently forgetting the history, the mystic, behind the name Torre.

How many international events has Eugene Torre attended?

In battles involving foreigners, there's no alternative to fielding in the grizzled, the war-tested. Their experience will skin the opposition tenfold, given the tight situations at times.

Didn't Romel Adducul prove that again in the recent Fiba-Asia Champions Cup?

Almost a so-so player now in the PBA for one reason or another, Romel Adducul, a veteran of many international jousts, has played so superbly in the Fiba-Asia Champions Cup that he merited inclusion in the tournament's prestigious Mythical 5 selection.

Some of our young chess players may not look favorably at Eugene Torre now. Always so reckless, careless if you will, the young have this tendency to be disrespectful of their elders. Sad, sad.

If you ask me, it's been years when Eugene Torre was Asia's No. 1, reaching the world's Top 10, or Top 8 if you will. He was in the Chess Interzonals in the Eighties, a feat no Filipino has ever done.

The years, well, in chess, they only add wisdom to a chess player. They don't dull but rather, they sharpen the skills of a chess buff. In any sport, it seems it's only in chess that a player becomes sharper and sharper with the passing of time. It's like wine: Agedness comes with the years.

Alas, our younger players don't seem to realize that. It can be gleaned from the way they treat Eugene Torre.

If I were Eugene Torre, I'd rather that I skip the eliminations. The mountain went to Mohammad, right?

Should our officials bow to the juveniles, woe not only to them but also to chess, a sport endlessly wracked by scandals due to the vicious cycle of having one weak leader to another lording over it.

Mob rule triumphs amid the deafening silence of our leaders.

When it does happen, when Eugene Torre is left in the cold, I'll cry a river for the death of true leadership.

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Mowelfund's 'Golf 101' a success

"MOWELFUND must be in dire straits.".

"*Pati* golf, *pinasok*."

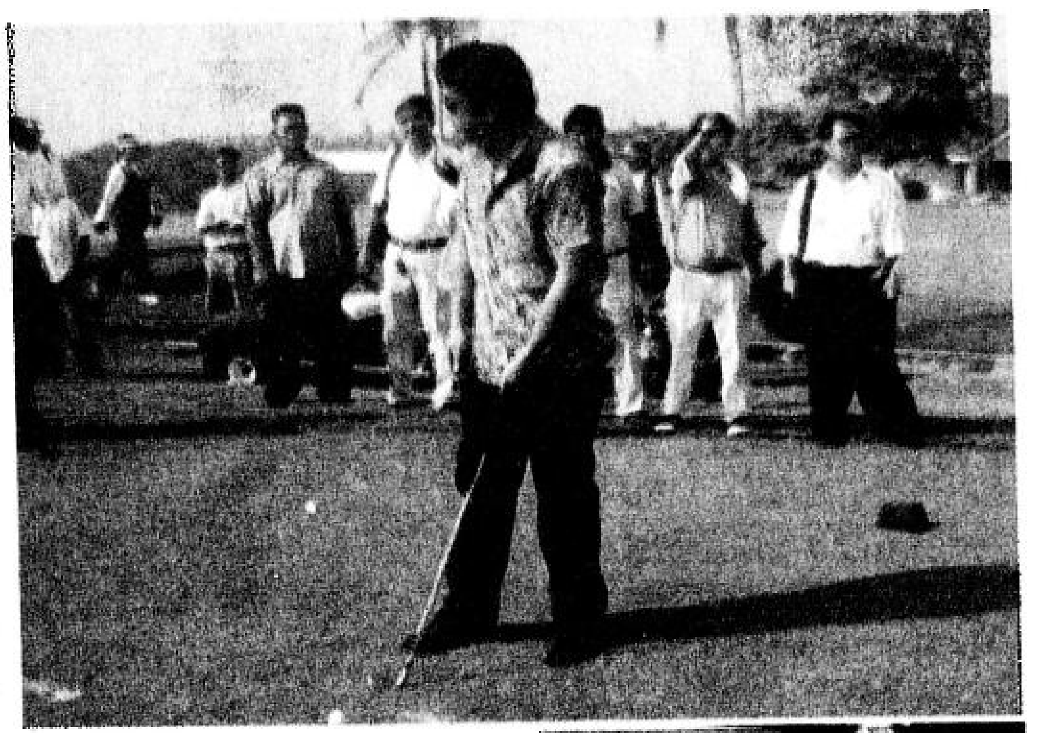
Off-the-cuff, good humored remarks such as these abounded during the recent "Golf 101" benefit tournament held by the Mowelfund (Movie Workers' Welfare Fund) Film Institute at the Capitol Hills Golf Course.

Senator Bong Revilla and former Senator Tito Sotto led the ceremonial tee-off, assisted by Noel Trinidad, Gary Lising, Rey Langit, Jay Sonza, Manny Luzon and Ricky Alegre, Diego Cagahastian and 11-year-old Dottie Ardina, four-time World Junior Champion.

Among the civic and business leaders who played in the tourney were Hector Calilung of FSC Services, Patricio Roman of Capitol Hills Golf Course, Rudy Mendoza of Astra, Jimmy Zeñarosa of Garsworth Marketing Inc., Boy Tagalag and Francis Paderna of Rotary Club Timog and Romeo Liamzon of the Chamber of Real Estate Builders Association.

Mowelfund's administration and finance director Julius Topacio played the entire 18 holes and was runner-up in the Class "C" Division. Other victors were Calilung, Sotto, Jimmy Zeñarosa, Lising, Cagahastian and Topacio. Businesswoman Nini Eustaquio received a special award.

GARY Lising receives his trophy from May Geronimo of Talkabout Marketing.



SEN. Ramon Revilla Jr. was up very early, for the love of movie workers.

FROM left, Angelica Jones, Mowelfund executive director Boots Anson-Roa, director for welfare Chit Sambile, Bobby Yan and Maffie Mapin

FORMER Sen. Tito Sotto, 1st runner-up, Class A

Box office king is a talking lion

LOS ANGELES—A talking lion became king of the box office as the animated tale "Madagascar" climbed to the No. 1 spot with $28.7 million in its second weekend.

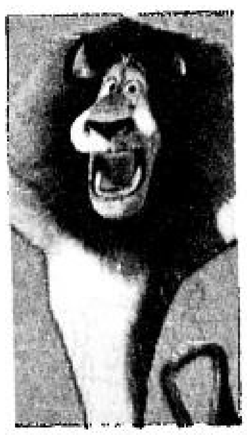
At No. 2 was Adam Sandler's football remake "The Longest Yard," which took in $26.1 million in its second weekend.

That left third place to "Star Wars: Episode III—Revenge of the Sith," which grossed $26 million in its third weekend, according to studio estimates Sunday.

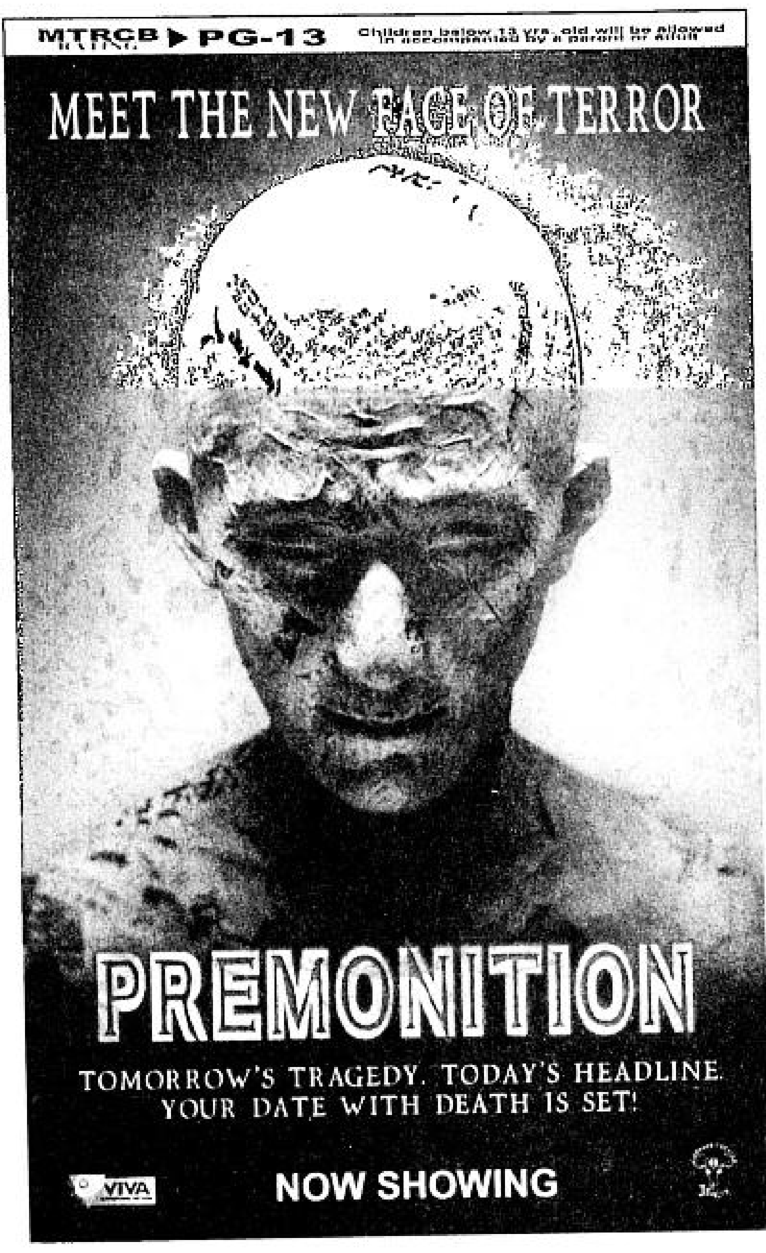
Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at North American theaters, according to Exhibitor Relations Co. Inc.

1) "Madagascar," $28.7M
2) "The Longest Yard," $26.1M
3) "Star Wars: Episode III — Revenge of the Sith," $26M
4) "Cinderella Man," $18.6M
5) "The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants," $10.25M
6) "Lords of Dogtown," $5.7M
7) "Monster-in-Law," $5.3M
8) "Crash," $3.3M
9) "Kicking & Screaming," $2.1M
10) "Unleashed," $900,000

AP



ALEX the Lion



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3 (DTS EX) MR. & MRS. SMITH
4 RING OF NIBELONGS

Cine Nepo
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1 SAY THAT YOU LOVE ME
2 MADAGASCAR
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4 (DTS) HOUSE OF WAX

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489
1 SAY THAT YOU LOVE ME
2 BOOGEYMAN
3 (DOLBY) THE INTERPRETER
4 (DTS) STARWARS: EPISODE-3

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 STARWARS: EPISODE-3
2 SAY THAT YOU LOVE ME

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(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City)
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2 (DOLBY) MR. & MRS. SMITH
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4 HOUSE OF WAX

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Lianas MovieCity
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YE OL' Juan de la Cruz band in familiar poses

Aging? Still engaging!

Wally Gonzalez, Mike Hanopol and Joey Smith play together again

By Pocholo Concepcion
Contributor

I'D LIKE to believe that the greatest Pinoy rock song ever written was "Tao," by Gary Perez, sung by Sampaguita. But then "Himig Natin" by the Juan de la Cruz band will always be a sentimental favorite, anthem of a generation of teenagers that experienced "maximum tolerance" from martial rule—because sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll could be had even when there was curfew.

Thirty-one years later, as the specter of Aids, drug-related deaths and disillusioned rock heroes stare us in the face, the members of Juan de la Cruz laugh at themselves and look as though they could let the world go hang—so long as they can still play some music.

'Pagkalas'

SHOW TIME

Wally Gonzalez, Mike Hanopol and Joey "Pepe" Smith are playing together again as a group in a reunion concert titled "Juan de la Cruz: Ang Pagkalas" on June 11 at the World Trade Center Metro Manila, Roxas Boulevard in Pasay City.

I thought the word "*pagkalas*" didn't jibe with reunion, only to be informed that "breaking out" here symbolized the band's independent spirit, because it was the first to fuse rock with Pinoy lyrics, which led to a golden age in contemporary Filipino music, otherwise known as OPM.

The news is that concert producer Danny Barrozo has also convinced Gonzalez, Hanopol and Smith to write an entirely new song out of the "*pagkalas*" concept, which they will try out on Saturday, the eve of Philippine Independence Day.

This is actually the third reunion concert of the Juan de la Cruz. First was in 1981 at the Araneta Coliseum, to promote "Kahit Anong Mangyari," the band's last studio album that was recorded to fulfill contracts after it had broken up. Second was in 2001 also at World Trade.

Attractions

This year, there are added attractions: four youthful stars from Radioactive Sago Project (Lourd De Veyra), Sandwich (Marc Abaya), Session Road (Hannah Romawac) and Sino C Kat (Kat Agarrado) will trade vocal rants with our aging yet still engaging icons.

Apparently, Smith and Hanopol have long abandoned their old roles as Juan de la Cruz's drummer and bassist, respectively, and would join Gonzalez on lead guitars. They hired Dondi Ledesma, Smith's favorite bass player and producer of his recently released solo album, plus an American session drummer to join them.

Juan de la Cruz didn't really start with Wally, Mike and Pepe. Although Wally was there from the beginning, his original co-members included Bing Labrador, Bo Razon, Alex Cruz and the late Edmond "Bosyo" Fortuno, who was responsible for taking the Filipino Everyman's name as their own.

Mind-blowing

"Mike and Pepe were friends and jamming with us," says Wally.

Juan de la Cruz's debut album, "Up in Arms," was released in 1971 and is now considered a collector's item. Yet the one that really blew everyone's minds was "Himig Natin," released in 1974, featuring Wally, Mike and Pepe on the cover, and containing the groundbreaking "Beep Beep," "Mamasyal sa Pilipinas," "Balong Malalim" and the title track. By then, Juan de la Cruz's other members had formed Anak Bayan.

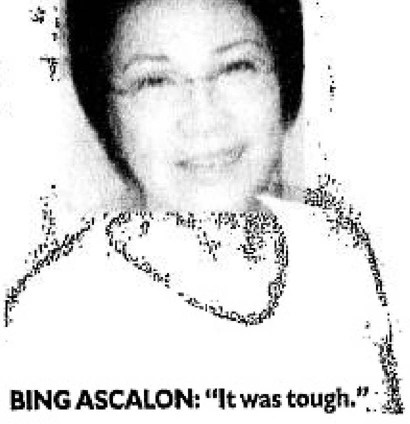
Discounting 1981's "Kahit Anong Mangyari," the Wally-Mike-Pepe lineup of Juan de la Cruz was good for only three albums—"Himig Natin," "Maskara" and the live set recorded in U.P. By the mid-'70s, Wally and Mike had released their own solo works.

Pepe was content being the vagabond, occasionally doing club stints in Olongapo and Clark, which he considered home since he was the son of an American serviceman.

In the '80s and '90s, many bands were formed with Juan de la Cruz as the inspiration. Let's see whether others will follow suit after watching Saturday's gig.

How to revive a TV station

Former ABS-CBN exec in Bacolod recalls post-martial law struggle



BING ASCALON: "It was tough."

By Marinel R. Cruz

BACOLOD CITY—"Reviving ABS-CBN's TV station here, which was closed down during Martial Law, was really tough, especially for a one-man army with very little resources."

Bing Ascalon, former Visayas cluster head for ABS-CBN regional network group, speaking to a group of entertainment writers, recounted her struggles after late network president Eugenio "Geny" Lopez instructed her to re-start operations here.

The late dictator Ferdinand Marcos had ordered the shutdown, citing private media organizations as enemies of the state.

"So I came here and saw that the place was so run down, it didn't even have a roof. It was eerie," recalled Ascalon. "We resumed activity, with just seven people—three reporters and three cameramen. We operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

Ascalon added: "We had a bamboo pole for an antenna. We were even quarrelling with Channel 4 over this place at the time. The Channel 4 people eventually left."

Station Manager for Western Visayas Leilani Alba, one of the team of seven, recalled the cramped office: "When it rained, the ceiling would drip and we had to move our things around to keep them from getting wet."

They borrowed cameras and used Ascalon's car for coverages. "All we had was airtime," Ascalon recounted. "But that same year, we aired our first live coverage of the Masskara Festival on 'TV Patrol Bacolod.'"

Thus "TV Patrol Bacolod" debuted in the No. 1 slot, Ascalon said, citing a Pulse Asia survey that year.

"ABS-CBN Manila was awestricken. People appreciated our work!" said Ascalon. "I think people were hungry for local news. The Marcos regime had just ended."

Golden Dove

The following year, the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas gave "TV Patrol Bacolod" the Golden Dove Award for Best Provincial Newscast.

When Ascalon retired in 2003, Jerry Benett took her place and Relaine Alvior became station manager for Bacolod.

The huge turnout in the recent Summer Kapamilya Caravan was an indication of the Bacoleño's continued support to the network, Ascalon noted. Last May 28, screaming fans greeted six floats that carried stars including Aga Muhlach, Edu Manzano, Bayani Agbayani, Ai-Ai de las Alas, Randy Santiago, Rica Peralejo, Vhong Navarro, Nikki Valdez, Toni Gonzaga and Charo Santos-Concio.

"We are overwhelmed by Bacolod's warm welcome," said "Maalaala Mo Kaya" host Charo Santos-Concio. "This is our simple way of giving back the love and [devotion] of all our Kapamilya here."

Bacolod Mayor Evelio Leonardia hosted breakfast at the ABS-CBN studio for the network's executives and talents. He handed Bacolod's Key of Friendship to Concio, who is also executive vice president and head of Entertainment, and Ron Valbueza, VP for regional network group.

An hour-long press conference, hosted by Negros Occidental Governor Joseph Marañon and Vice Governor Isidro Zayco, was held at the Bacolod City Hall at 9 a.m. Some 40 members of the local media were present.

Questions concerning stars transferring from one TV channel to another, their talent fees, as well as the network's losses were asked. After confirming that ABS-CBN had lost P141 million in sales, Concio said: "Losses are a part of life. What's important is how we cope with the crisis."

WITH her current staff, from left, Leilani Alba, Relaine Alvior and Jonali Dionzon

---

The Engelbert edge

Near the end of every concert starring Engelbert Humperdinck, when the band plays the opening strains of "Release Me," the women weep. This is because they know the show is about to end. Such is the singer's attraction and connection with devoted fans. Humperdinck is Manila-bound for a one-night-only concert on June 24 at the PICC Plenary Hall, CCP Complex. Tickets are at P5,000, P2,500, P1,500 and P800. Call 374-2222, 374-9999 or 891-9999.

RARE PERFORMANCE
Piolo Pascual was a very special guest at the birthday party of Gloria Garcia, wife of former ABS-CBN president Freddie Garcia. From right, clockwise: Piolo and the belly dancers of Gina Jane Grey (in turquoise), the Garcias (from left—Rey Jose, Miguel and wife Rosan, Anna G. Reyes, Gloria and Freddie, Carlo and wife Kay, and Richie); the singer and the birthday girl.

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A movie a day

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

OUR film channels on cable TV offer viewing treats that we invite movie buffs to sample. This week on the Cinemax channel, for instance, these films are of particular interest:

Today at 10:15 a.m., "The Trouble with Harry." This 1955 black comedy by **Alfred Hitchcock** marked the debut of Oscar and Golden Globe winner **Shirley MacLaine.**

The trouble with Harry is that he's dead, but his corpse keeps popping up in a quiet neighborhood, even if it's been buried several times. The residents are all convinced that they had some hand in causing Harry's death. A mischievous movie from the master of suspense.

Tomorrow at 11:45 a.m., "The Man Who Knew Too Much." Again by Alfred Hitchcock, this 1956 remake of the 1934 remake which he also directed stars **James Stewart** and **Doris Day.**

Doctor Ben McKenna (Stewart), his wife Jo (Day) and their son Hank are on holiday in Africa. While in Marrakech, they meet a mysterious man who gets murdered, but not before he manages to reveal to McKenna an assassination attempt that is to take place in London.

From thereon, the family is drawn into the web, with the assassins kidnapping Hank. Will Ben and Jo be able to save their son and thwart the assassination?

June 11 at 5:30 p.m., "Owning Mahoney." Dan Mahoney (**Philip Seymour Hoffman**) is a quiet, unassuming bank employee who is dating a mousy bank teller named Belinda (**Minnie Driver**). What no one knows is that Dan has a secret life—he is a compulsive gambler, and runs up huge debts.

At the bank, he has the authority to transfer funds. Needing to cover his debts, Dan starts approving loans to non-existent clients, and adding hundreds of thousands of dollars to other accounts.

But his illegal dealings become harder to hide from the authorities and Belinda, who becomes aware of Dan's addiction to gambling.

June 12 at 6:30 p.m., "Empire of the Sun." Steven Spielberg's powerful saga of a British schoolboy's harrowing survival amid World War II chaos in China.

Raised in an upper-class environment, Jim (**Christian Bale**) is suddenly cast into the streets when he is separated from his family during the Japanese invasion of Shanghai. When a tough, opportunistic American seaman (**John Malkovich**) befriends him, he learns what it takes to stay alive.

June 13 at 2:30 p.m., "Orange County." Ever since Shaun (**Colin Hanks**) studied the works of professor Marcus Skinner, he's been itching to get into Stanford University to evict the memories of his lackluster youth in peaceful Orange County. But he receives an ego-deflating rejection letter.

He enlists the help of his girlfriend and his drugged-out brother Lance (**Jack Black**) to prove that he's got the right stuff to get on the university's enrollment list.

June 14 at 10 a.m., "American Crime." Ambitious young reporter Jesse (**Rachel Leigh Cook**) is assigned to cover the story of two dead women who, hours before they were killed, were videotaped going about their daily routines. Together with her news producer and a production assistant, they investigate the deaths through the videotapes.

To their horror, it appears that the killer is now stalking Jesse! When she disappears, her colleagues must team up with reality crime TV show host Albert (**Cary Elwes**) to find the killer and Jesse before time runs out.

June 15 at 9:45 a.m., "Reality Bites." College valedictorian Lelaina (**Winona Ryder**) lands a job as an assistant on a local morning television show. As an aspiring filmmaker, she documents the surprising and often hilarious "bites" of her friends' everyday reality. Other stars include **Ethan Hawke, Jeneanne Garofalo** and **Ben Stiller,** who is also the movie's director.

Color them Pink

THE CURRENT Pink (Gay) Film Festival at the UP Film Institute (until June 22) presents these films: today at 5 p.m., "Duda." 7 p.m., Inter.M@tes. Tomorrow at 5 p.m., **Ellen Ongkeko-Marfil**'s "Mga Pusang Gala" with **Ricky Davao** and **Irma Adlawan**. 7 p.m., "Lesbyanadrama." June 11 at 5 p.m., "American Pink." 7 p.m., "That Man Peter Berlin."

Easy English seminars

CORBAN Learning Institute (842-6665) is slating a new series of Easy English seminars on Jun 18 and 19, from 2 to 5 p.m., for college students, housewives and professionals. The comprehensive package of conversation, grammar, pronunciation and business writing runs for 10 sessions, or a total of 30 hours.

'The Human Mind'

THIS month, the Discovery Channel takes a pioneering journey through the unexplored world inside our own heads, with "The Human Mind," a series airing every Tuesday at 8 p.m., with replays on Wednesdays at 4 a.m. and 12 noon, and Saturdays at 3 p.m. This week's episode uncovers what happens when we learn, remember and have original ideas. Fascinating!

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7 ARE WE THERE YET?
8 SHUT UP AND KISS ME
9 SAY THAT YOU LOVE ME
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11 PREMONITION
12 MADAGASCAR

sm city fairview
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2 PREMONITION
3 UNLEASHED
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5 SHUTTER
6 SAY THAT YOU LOVE ME
7 MR. & MRS. SMITH
8 MADAGASCAR
9 SIN CITY
10 LA VISA LOCA
11 HOUSE OF WAX
12 A LOT LIKE LOVE

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10 PREMONITION

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7 MADAGASCAR
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2 SAY THAT YOU LOVE ME
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4 MR. & MRS. SMITH

sm city baguio
1 MR. & MRS. SMITH
2 MADAGASCAR
3 GUESS WHO
4 THE AMITYVILLE HORROR

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3 A LOT LIKE LOVE
4 MR. & MRS. SMITH

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3 THE INTERPRETER
4 SHAOLIN VS EVIL

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1 MR. & MRS. SMITH
2 THE AMITYVILLE
3 MADAGASCAR
4 STARWARS: EPISODE III

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

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1 SIN CITY
2 STARWARS: EPISODE III
3 MR. & MRS. SMITH
4 MADAGASCAR
5 BOOGEYMAN
6 COACH CARTER
7 SAY THAT YOU LOVE ME
8 MR. & MRS. SMITH

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4 MADAGASCAR
5 HEAD IN THE CLOUDS
6 MR. & MRS. SMITH
7 RESERVED
8 THE AMITYVILLE HORROR

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3 COACH CARTER
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Phillip's ex will appeal ruling

By Marinel R. Cruz

BUSINESSWOMAN Cristina Castillo-Decena is set to file a motion for reconsideration after the Las Piñas Regional Trial Court on Tuesday dismissed for "lack of probable cause" the estafa case she filed against her former live-in partner, actor Phillip Salvador.

This was in connection with 10 jeepneys that she bought in December 2001, ostensibly for management by Philip's brother, Ramon.

In a resolution dated June 3, Judge Raul Bautista Villanueva said if it could be proven that Decena entrusted P1,220,000 to the Salvadors but the money was not returned to her, "then she can seek redress for the damages she supposedly suffered in an appropriate civil proceeding."

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez earlier "directed" the Las Piñas Prosecutor's Office to "cause the withdrawal" of the estafa case. State Prosecutor II Thelma Cativo, on the other hand, concurred with Decena's claim that Ramon "falsely assured" her he could generate up to P6,000 a day from the second-hand vehicles.

Villanueva said these "conflicting" resolutions had created "a cloud of doubt as to the existence of probable cause."

Decena said she gave Ramon the money for the jeepneys on Dec. 10, 2001, but that never saw any earnings.

She said a court hearing is set on June 13 at the Las Piñas RTC, for another estafa case she filed in connection with a company she helped put up with the brothers in Hong Kong, the Phillip Salvador Freight and Remittance International Ltd.

Belles of the ball

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

KC Concepcion and Karel Marquez
RODEL ROTONI

ATLANTIS resident director Bobby Garcia was the first to point out that KC Conception and Karel Marquez, his two Belles for the Disney musical "Beauty and the Beast" couldn't be more dissimilar.

But the girls also have a lot of similarities. Both have show biz moms: Pinky Marquez for Karel and Sharon Cuneta for KC. Both are veejays: Myx for Karel and MTV Asia for KC.

"They're both very charismatic," assistant director and co-star Chari Arespacochaga said.

"Beauty and the Beast" will premiere at the Meralco Theater on June 16 and will have 24 performances.

TAKE FIVE

How do you see Belle?

KM: Even if other people think she's odd or weird, she knows what's right and will stand by it. She's strong and independent. When she loves, she gives her all. And she's devoted to her family.

KC: She's lovely. She's very polite, but she stands her ground. She's also mysterious. There are things she keeps to herself because she doesn't want to bother others. She's very deep. She won't pay attention to unimportant things. She's also curious about the world beyond her little town. It's interesting to find out where she draws her strength from.

How do you relate with Belle?

KM: She loves her dad, her family and friends. Same here. I'm very close to my family.

KC: I also love books. I read my mom's Nancy Drew collection as a kid. Now, I'm into Paulo Coelho. A lot of inspirational stuff. Business books. Last one I read was "Flower Drum Song."

How do your respective moms show their support?

KM: My mom is also in the play (as Mrs. Potts). When we're rehearsing, I don't think of her as my mom. She's more like my *barkada*. In one scene where she has to sing to me, she's always the first to cry. She helps me a lot.

KC: She constantly reminds me to be grounded and focused. She assured me that I didn't have to fly from Paris [where I'm based] to New York, where she had a concert. She wanted me to concentrate on my rehearsals.

How's Bobby Garcia as director?

KM: He doesn't get mad. He's very detailed. He gives good advice.

KC: He's funny! His humor is very British. Very wry. But he's also very patient.

How did it feel the first time you wore Belle's costumes?

KM: At the pictorial, KC whispered to me: We're really Belle! The gold ball gown at the climax is beautiful, but heavy.

KC: I was on the verge of tears! Even in Belle's blue apron, I felt great!

There's no rivalry between you?

KM: At the start of rehearsals, our director told us: "The two Belles will be different. They will have their own styles." We help each other out.

KC: We've really bonded. We don't clash. We complement each other. I'm hyper and she's so laid back. That's why we learn from each other. I emulate her calmness and she tries to approximate my energy!

How do you take care of your voice?

KM: I just need sleep. I still take cold drinks because they don't affect my voice. It's when I lack sleep that I get hoarse and can't hit the high notes.

KC: When I sleep late, I lose my voice. I have to make sure that I turn in before 12. I refrain from talking too much. After rehearsals, I go home and apply vapor rub on and put a scarf around my neck.

You also had workshops for this play?

KM: With no less than Lea Salonga and Menchu Lauchengco-Yulo! They taught us how to attack the role, how to reach the notes.

KC: They're our favorite stage actresses. They're so kind and generous. I also had a voice teacher in France. Her name's Amy Lavietes, an opera singer and musical theater actress. She taught me that singing is a lifestyle, an art. That I should never draw attention to myself ... and when doing a play, I should serve the music and the playwright.

What's your favorite Belle song?

KM: "A Change in Me." It has a nice melody.

KC: Also "A Change in Me." It's a very uplifting, happy song.

What's your dream musical?

KM: "Alice in Wonderland." Or "Once on this Island." Something totally different. Or "Alikabok."

KC: I'd love to play Satine in "Moulin Rouge." Also, Alice. "A Chorus Line" and "West Side Story." I'd love to do something in Filipino or Kapampangan!

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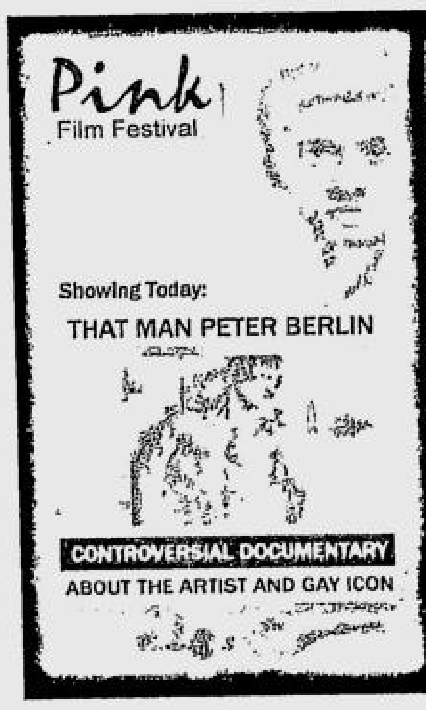
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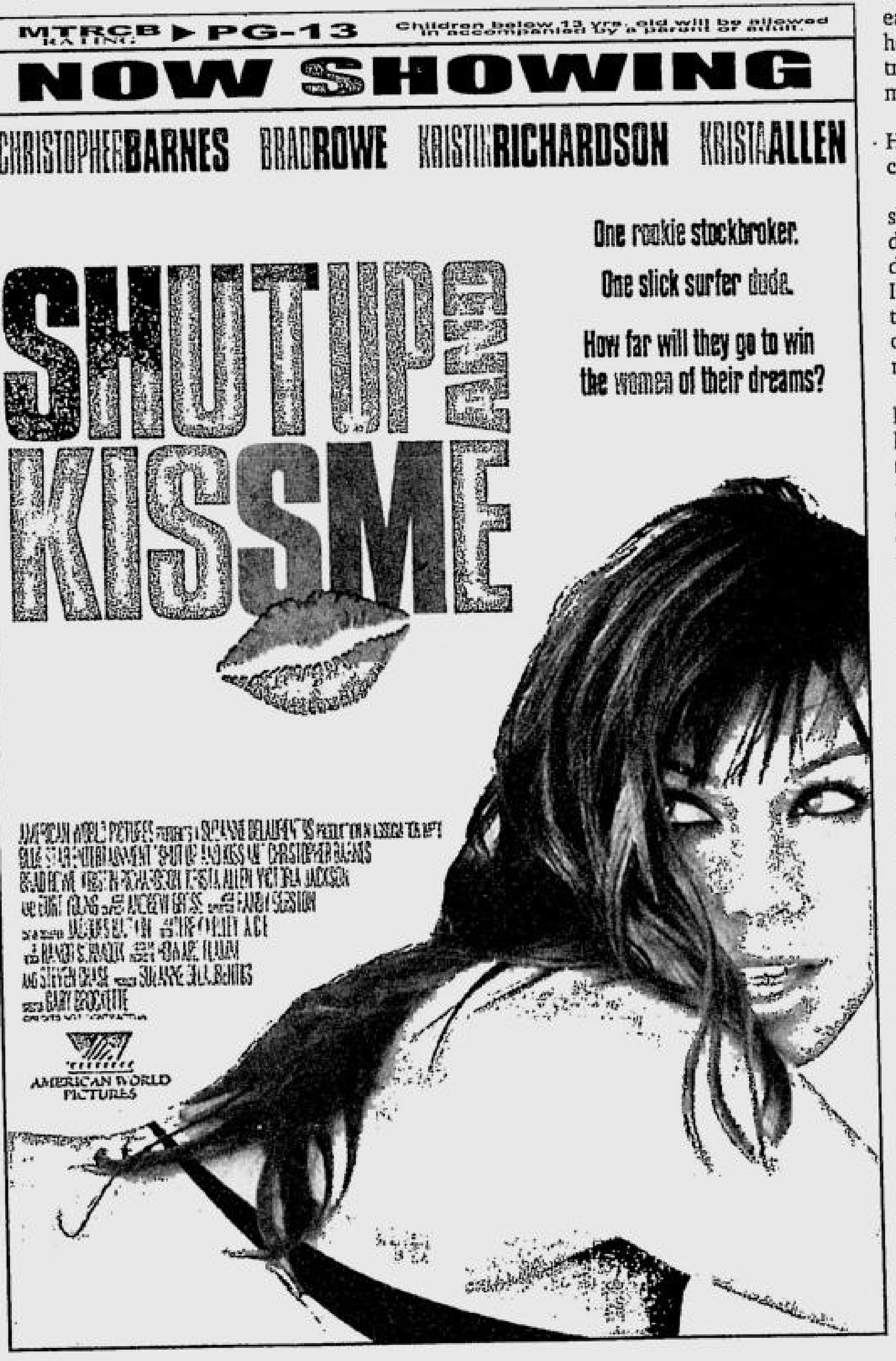

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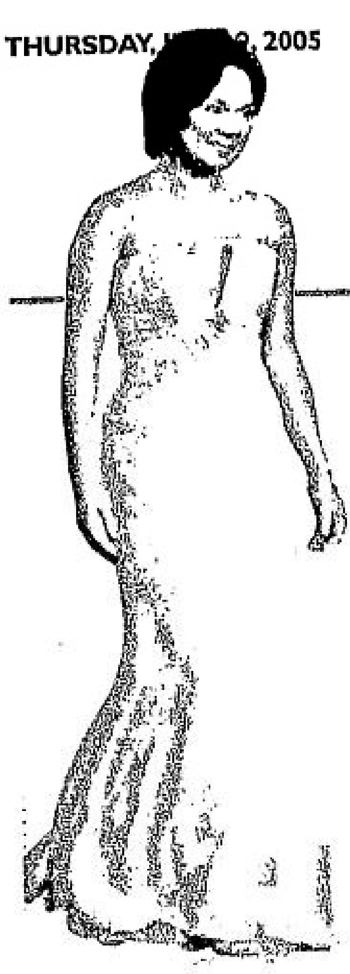
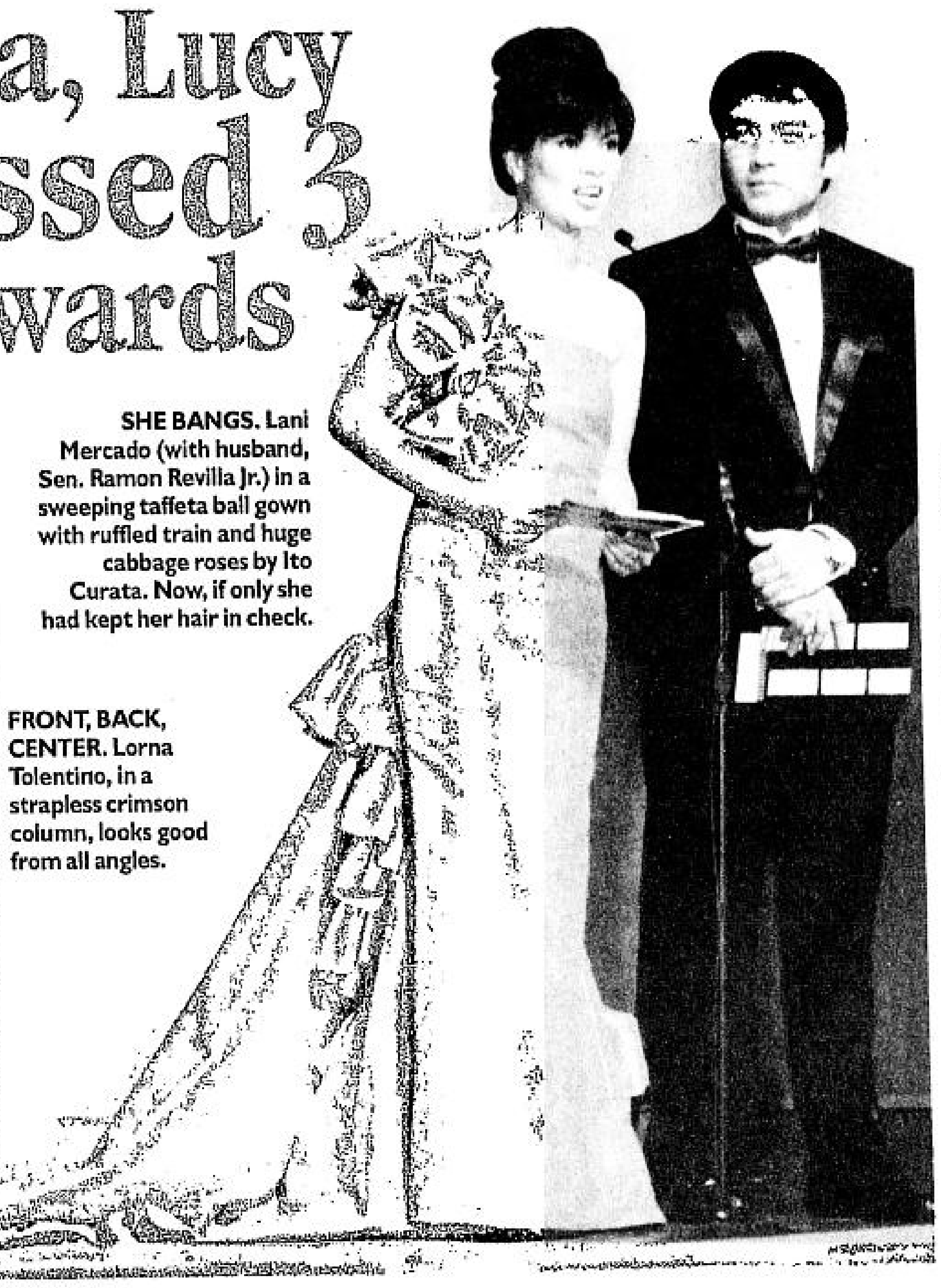
Editor Emmie G. Velarde

Lani, Lorna, Lucy Best-dressed 3 at Urian Awards



GREEN PIECE. Judy Ann Santos in a strapless apple green gown with pleated and distressed detail made of chiffon.

FRONT, BACK, CENTER. Lorna Tolentino, in a strapless crimson column, looks good from all angles.



SHE BANGS. Lani Mercado (with husband, Sen. Ramon Revilla Jr.) in a sweeping taffeta ball gown with ruffled train and huge cabbage roses by Ito Curata. Now, if only she had kept her hair in check.

LIGHT AND SHADOW. Fair-skinned Lucy Torres, in a Grecian-inspired chiffon number.

Text by Alex Y. Vergara
Photos by Jim Guiao Punzalan

YOU'VE got to hand it to our female stars. They came dressed to the nines for the recent Urian Awards at the AFP Theater in Quezon City—despite an earlier downpour and knee-deep floods.

Never mind if shoddily dressed fans outnumbered celebrities 1,000 to one, the likes of Lucy Torres, Lorna Tolentino and Lani Mercado didn't ditch their fabulous gowns in favor of ponchos.

The stylish trio would have easily made the top of our list had the Manunuri allowed us to vote for "Star of the Night." Alas, no such category merited a trophy. Come on guys, lighten up!

Absolutely regal

Lani looked absolutely regal in Ito Curata's sweeping ball gown in persimmon, fashioned from iridescent taffeta. The column was accentuated with a ruffled train, its strapless bodice embellished with multiple cabbage roses.

Not only did the silhouette flatter Lani's figure, the larger-than-life gown, which borrowed liberally from the decadent 1980s, provided a refreshing departure from the safe and minimalist outfits she was known to favor in the past.

As misfortune would have it, however, her full bangs nearly wreaked havoc on the overall look. The windswept hairstyle (did she and Sen. Bong Revilla ride a motorbike?) may have worked on a younger woman, but not on a politician's wife and brand-new granny.

Lorna opted for a chignon in keeping with the clean look, exuding simplicity in Paul Cabral's sculpted silk column in flaming crimson. The satin trim on the neckline morphed into a twisted, one-sided faux strap that cascaded down her back.

Lucy rounds off our posse of the Top 3, in Randy Ortiz's Grecian-inspired number in an unusual and tricky color combination consisting of aqua, brown and mustard.

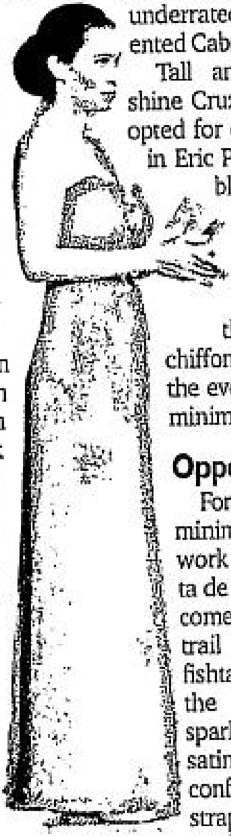
The gown had all the classic elements, from the pleated and twisted straps to the sweeping train, plus a few twists such as the beaded lace accent. Lucy went for a younger look by wearing her slightly curled tresses down.

Unlike the first time she won Best Actress earlier this year, a noticeably slimmer Judy Ann Santos ditched black in favor of Cabral's strapless apple green silk-and-chiffon creation with a plunging V in front.

Aside from echoing the gown's low neckline, a hand-pleated chiffon detail found on the bodice and hips was frayed for added texture.

Juday's decision to opt for color and show some skin—and arrive on the arms of boyfriend Ryan Agoncillo—paid off beautifully. The gown was another masterstroke by the underrated but extremely talented Cabral.

Tall and fair-skinned Sunshine Cruz also glowed, having opted for color and simple lines in Eric Pineda's strapless royal blue goddess column. If we take away the gown's ruched bodice, glittery brooch and behind-the-scene extension, the chiffon number was one of the evening's most successful minimalist numbers.



SUNSHINE Cruz in a minimalist royal blue chiffon sheath.

Opposite problems

For some reason, a similar minimalist formula didn't work quite as well for Assunta de Rossi. After a smashing comeback on the fashion trail last month in a gold fishtail at the Luna Awards, the lean actress lacked sparkle in a chocolate brown satin dress with beadwork confined to the neckline and straps.

If lack of weight seemed to be Assunta's problem, the opposite seemed to apply to the voluptuous and buxomly Ara Mina, who was bursting all over in Maxi Cinco's clingy and beaded column with a décolletage.

Must for Ara

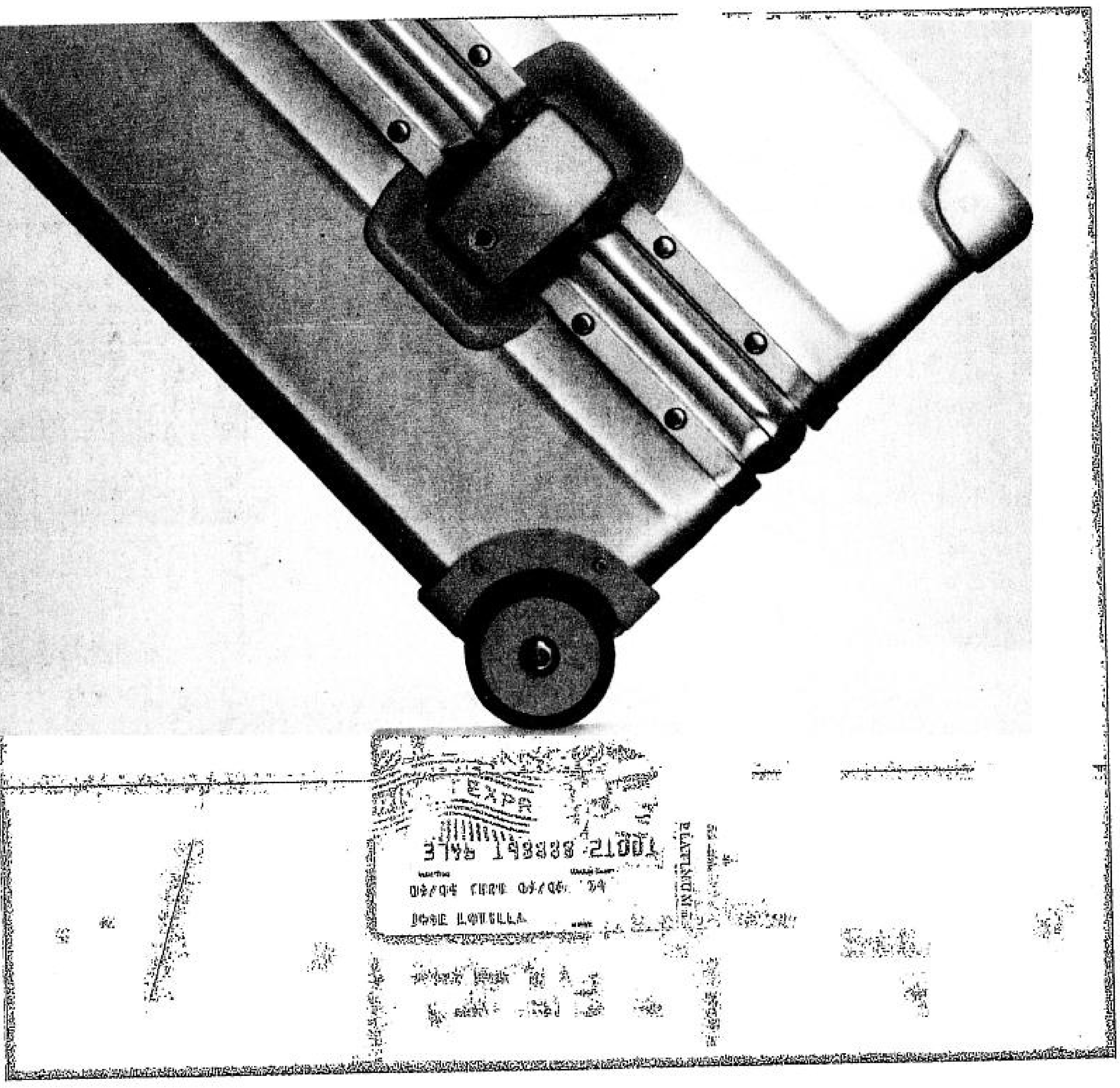
The still lovely Snooky Serna, who revealed considerable skin in Pepsi Herrera's black number, was also hampered by her full figure.

It was a case of the wearer, not the gown, since the former child star is now a wee bit too mature to do justice to a body-hugging outfit with a super-plunging neckline, Someone her age and stature would have looked better in a draped sheath that offered judicious measure of exposure.

As for Ara, it is imperative for her and her designer to try harder in future collaborations until they hit upon the right look. A puckering bodice doesn't a sexy star make.

(E-mail the author at avergara@inquirer.com.ph)

BOTTOM THREE. From left, minimalist malfunction for Assunta de Rossi, who lacks sparkle in a chocolate brown satin dress; Snooky Serna in a body-torturing halter, and Ara Mina's charms runneth over in this beaded and strapless column.



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Regarding 'Mr. & Mrs. Smith'

The couple: fun and watchable

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit
Contributor

REVIEW

INTENSE and controversial Hollywood A-listers Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie are a scorchingly pretty duo, to be sure. Between them, they have all the fan bases covered. So putting them together in one movie is sheer casting genius.

The team-up and concept works in "Mr. & Mrs. Smith." We all have seen Pitt and Jolie as gun-toting and super-articulate action figures before; the two of them playing assassins wasn't too much of a stretch. But to have two top-notch killers-for-hire married to each other and discovering the fact after several years of complete secrecy and growing boredom provides the actors with plenty of offbeat situations.

Chemistry

Pitt and Jolie's on-screen chemistry translates rather well, flavoring the working tandem of Simon Kinberg's screenplay and Doug Liman's direction. Generically named characters John and Jane are accessibly mundane people, but they're also efficient mercenaries that moviegoers can get attached to right after suspending disbelief that the spouses managed to keep their secret identities from each other for so long.

It's actually hard to take sides when they try to kill each other! It's fun, seeing this already-fantastical situation escalate into a "Spy Versus Spy" melee, often peppered by charmingly cheesy one-liners.

It's an action-packed romantic comedy with shades of "War of the Roses," "Bonnie and Clyde" and the twisted, flirty and violent relationships of quite a number of iconic TV and comic book heroes and anti-heroes (Buffy and Spike, Batman and Catwoman and Daredevil and Elektra, to name a few). Jolie and Pitt were able to incorporate subtleties as well as calculating cruelty into Jane and John, which make the love-hate relationship a particularly dynamic one.

Weeks of action training didn't go to waste either, as the two looked credible enough, stunts-wise.

The action shots don't look clumsy, even when Jolie and Pitt are just dancing together. They're able to maintain a very kinetic vibe throughout the film, but their quiet moments are all the more personality-shaping, thanks to Liman. The director's strong suit has always been characterization, and that's also particularly helpful on supporting characters played by Vince Vaughn and Adam Brody.

There's nothing deep or emotionally binding about "Mr. & Mrs. Smith," but it's appealing on an almost visceral level. You also get to see two of the sexiest people on the planet together and there are gunfights and explosions galore. These aren't half-bad reasons to watch it.

And they're a very watchable couple indeed, those devilish, gorgeous Smiths.

The film: predictable, uninspiring

By Anna Paloma
Contributor

"MR. & MRS. Smith" is a highly anticipated film because Brad and Angelina are rumored to have not only played Mr. and Mrs. Smith but also made attempts to play Mr. and Mrs. Pitt in a relationship that is perceived to have ended Brad's marriage to the real Mrs. Pitt, Jennifer Aniston.

No, this is not the remake of Alfred Hitchcock's 1941 comedy flick of the same title, but both films concern couples in failing marriages. In the current "Mr. And Mrs. Smith," the premise is simple. John and Jane Smith may seem to be a typical upper-class suburban couple but each provides cover for the other's clandestine career as an international world-class assassin. When they are double-booked on the same target, their identities are revealed and protocol requires that they take each other out.

Bruckheimer-ish

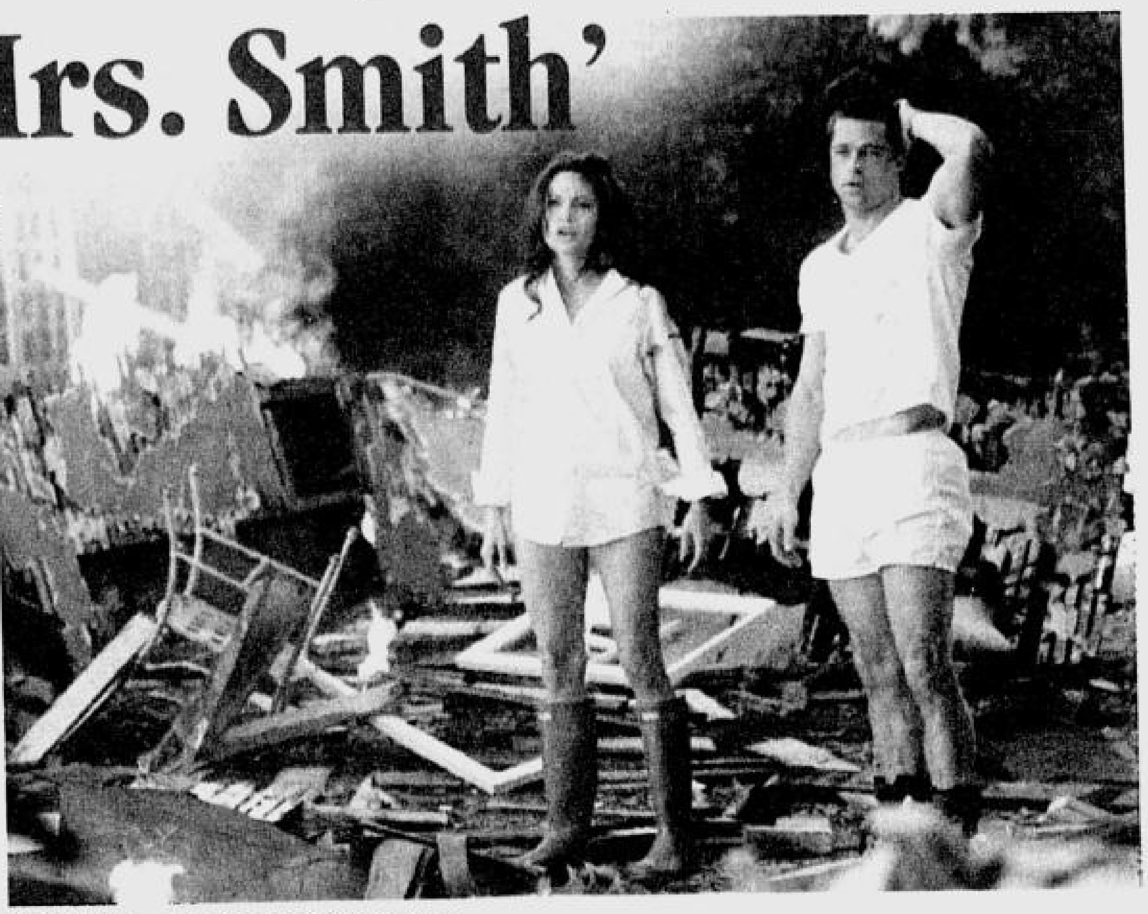
The movie starts with a bit of humor, some decent action scenes, a bit of intrigue and some interesting clue as to where the story is going. But it ends up being a loud, car-crashing, gun-shooting type, almost something you would expect in a Jerry Bruckheimer production. In two words, predictable and uninspiring.

When director Doug Liman, focused on the characters and their non-traditional relationship, he's on safe ground. Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie smolder, and their chemistry couldn't be better. Whether they're shooting at each other, tossing around double entendres, or ripping each other's clothing off, Mr. & Mrs. Smith's two stars are sexy and magnetic (individually and together). Foreplay for the Smiths involves not only disrobing, but disarming, and the screenplay gives the actors plenty of delicious lines to chew on.

Too much

Unfortunately, the script also calls for too much action, and that's where everything falls apart. The film has so much action padding, it becomes tiresome after a while. Liman tries to juice things up by using atypical camera angles and innovative fight choreography, as he did in "The Bourne Identity." But the film doesn't have the decency to render a legitimate payoff. It just … ends.

I must say "Mr. and Mrs. Smith" is not that great a movie. I'm sure it opened well, but I don't see it having staying power. It reminds me of "The Mexican," another movie that starred two Hollywood heavyweights, Brad Pitt and Julia Roberts: much drummed up but disappointing.



TWO OF the sexiest people on the planet

Meanwhile, Brad Pitt abhors the attention

NEW YORK—Brad Pitt is taking on poverty and Aids in Africa—and the tabloids.

In an hour-long ABC "Primetime Live" special set to air Tuesday night, Pitt talks to Diane Sawyer about the humanitarian crisis in Africa.

"I can't get out of the press. These people can't get in the press. So let's redirect the attention a little bit," he tells Sawyer.

"We have the potential to end poverty [in Africa] in our time. … Man—I mean, what is more exciting than that?"

Pitt separated from Jennifer Aniston in January after almost five years of marriage. Aniston, 36, filed for divorce in March, citing irreconcilable differences.

He calls tabloid speculation that his "Mr. & Mrs. Smith" co-star Angelina Jolie played a role in the breakup of his marriage "a good story."

Says Sawyer: "But that's painful too.

"Yeah, but, well, listen, let me speak from my experience," he says. "You know I've been in these tabloids for 14 years now. And at some point you just become a Zen master of it all."

Misguided

He calls the media focus on his personal life "misguided," and denies that he wanted children and Aniston didn't.

"Ridiculous … completely fabricated," the 41-year-old actor says. "You know, you find that these stories … will turn one of us into the good guy and one of us into the bad guy. … Most of these stories, you get probably two percent real fruit juice and the rest is just garbage with no nutritional value."

Photos of Pitt, Jolie—who turned 30 on Saturday—and her 4-year-old son, Maddox, walking together on a beach in Africa were published in April. Did he know there would be cameras there?

"You know, obviously not," he says. "I mean, it's an amazing fact, the bounty that's on my head, the lengths they'd go to and the amount of money that they're paying for those shots . … I can't help but think what that money could have gone to. … I would have set up the damn pictures myself."

However, Pitt says he dreams of having a family someday.

"Just feels like a natural progression," he tells Sawyer. "And, you know, anything to get the focus off myself. It's gotta be a healthy thing." AP

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

TV GUIDE
Thursday, June 9, 2005

club tv
Laura Jean
June_18/saturday_6pm
feel_the_vibe
ABC

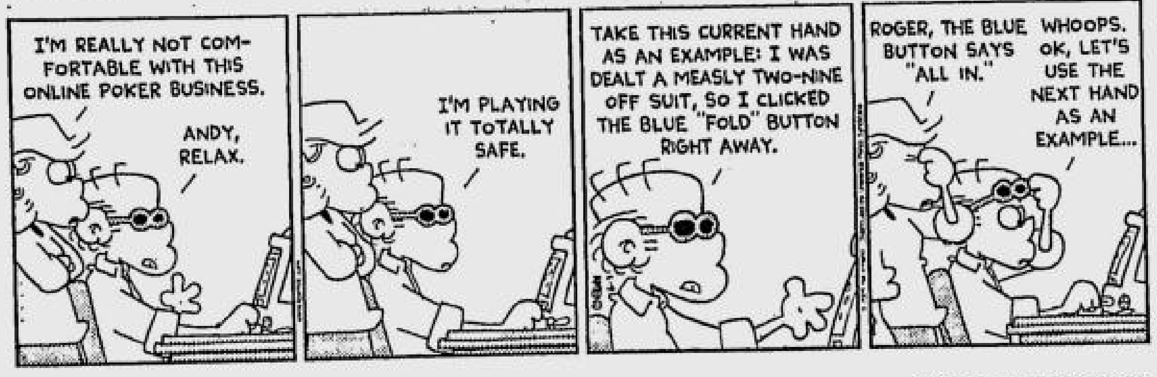
ClickTheCity.com

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Showbiz No. 1 (4:25PM)	Yu-Gi-Oh! (5:10PM)	TV Patrol World (5:35PM)		Meteor Garden Full Edition		Mga Anghel Na Walang Langit	Ikaw Ang Lahat Sa Akin	Memories Of Bali	Opids	Kampanerang Kuba	Maalaala Mo Kaya			Insider
ABC 5			EZ Shop		FIBA (Reruns)				Sentro	American Idol			The Best Of Guinness Book Of Records		Big News	Inq TV		ESPN Golf	
GMA 7	Saang Sulok Ng Langit	Now and Forever	Glass Shoes	One Piece	Flame Of Recca	Full House		24 Oras		Dama		Encantadia	Extra Challenge		All About Eve	Magpakailanman			Saksi
RPN 9		Metro TV Shopping	Defenders Of The Earth	Hey Arnold!	As Told By Ginger	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	The Insider	NBA On RPN					Band Of Brothers		Newswatch Now	Video Hit Parade	Kasangga Mo Ang Langit	Police Hour
IBC 13		Lifestyle		EZ Shop		Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Pangarap Kong Jackpot		Home Shopping Network		Sports Feature			TM-9 Ball		IBC News Tonite		
JackTV	Just For Laughs	Just For Laughs	Ride With Funk Master Flex	Slackers				Cinematech	Family Guy	Mad TV		Reno 911	Crank Yankers	South Park	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	Hip-Hop Nation	Ride With Funk Master Flex	WWE Velocity	
Nickelodeon	Blues Clues	Rugrats	The Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	All That	Are You Afraid of the Dark?	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	The Adventures Of Jimmy Neutron	Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	Cow At The Moo-vies	Yakkity Yak	Chalkzone	Rocket Power	Hey Arnold!	The Wild Thornberrys	The Angry Beavers	Rugrats
MYX	MYX Firsts	Urban MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	My MYX	Take 5	OPM MYX	Mellow MYX	Star MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Pop MYX	Urban MYX	MYX Presents		My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX	Mellow MYX
ETC		Significant Others	Knock First	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Elimidate	Change of Heart	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	Good Morning Miami	Committed	American Dreams		Queer Eye For The Straight Girl		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
Studio 23								Batman Beyond	Beyblade	Wazzup Wazzup	Birds Of Prey	Alias		Desperate Housewives		News Central	Oprah		Chefs On The Go
AXN		Fear Factor		CSI NY (Season I)		Gensomaden Saiyuki	Gensomaden Saiyuki			Boomtown		30 Seconds To Fame	Mondo Magic	Lost		The Contender			
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		Hollywood Squares	Home Improvement	Buffy The Vampire Slayer		The Simpsons	The Drew Carey Show	Star News Asia	Friends	Invasion Iowa	Growing Up Gotti	The Simple Life	Arrested Development	The Apprentice		Friends	Invasion Iowa
CNN		Business International		Larry King Live		World News	World Sport	Business International		World News	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia		Your World Today	
National Geographic		Frontiers Of Construction		Explorations Powered By Duracell		Evolution		Egypt Detectives	Africa From The Ground Up	Wow		About Asia		National Geographic Specials		Frontiers Of Construction		Explorations Powered By Duracell	
Solar Sports					TV Shopping	FIVB Montreux '05 Volley Masters				GWS Ep.22-2005	In This Corner		Sports Desk	WNBA Game Phoenix @ Sparks				Vintage NBA	
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens	The Fix	Mission Organization	Carol Duvall	Moto Mario	Hot Off The Grill	Good Eats	Extreme Cuisine	Unwrapped	Tyler's Ultimate	E! News Weekend		Good Finds	Life & Style		Area		Road & Track	Back To Basics
HBO	The Cat's Meow (2:20PM)			Stripes (4:15PM)				The Dirt Bike Kid			Reckless Kelly (7:40PM)			Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom				A Man Apart (10:55PM)	
Star Movies	Rambo First Blood 2			Prozac Nation (4:05PM)			K-9 (5:45PM)				Out For A Kill			Instinct				The Rats (A.K.A. The Colony) (11:05PM)	
Cartoon Network	Scooby-Doo Show	The All New Popeye Show		Tom & Jerry Show	The Woody Woodpecker Show	Ed, Edd N Eddy	Static Shock	Xiaolin Showdown	Teen Titans	Zoids Fusers	Medabots	The Looney Tunes Show		The Powerpuff Girls	Johnny Bravo	Time Squad	Thundercats	Xiaolin Showdown	Teen Titans
Disney Channel	Mr Bean: The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Untalkative Bunny	So Little Time	Buzz Lightyear Of Star Command	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr Bean: The Animated Series	House Of Mouse	Tuck Everlasting			So Little Time	Sabrina, The Animated Series	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Chip N Dale's Rescue Rangers	Pixel Perfect	
Cinemax			Gidget Goes To Rome (3:45PM)				Ihaka: Blunt Instrument (5:45PM)				High School High			Eight Legged Freaks			The Evil That Men Do (10:40PM)		
Hallmark Channel	Who's The Boss	Strong Medicine		HCA: The Fairytaler	Sesame Street		Mad About You	Who's The Boss	The Nanny	Sue Thomas: F.B.Eye		Strong Medicine		Spin			Judging Amy (10:35PM)		Sue Thomas: F.B Eye (11:25PM)
Discovery Channel		Hour Asia		Hour China		Wild Discovery		Extreme Machines				Superstructures		The Ultimate Guide		Science Of Star Wars		Power Zone	
MTV Philippines			Hangin Out at MTV		MTV Get Spotted		TRL		Lokal Orange & Lemons	MTV Divas		Battle for Ozzfest	One Bad Trip	Wildboyz	Cribs	On Board at MTV	MTV Urban Beats	VH1 Video Collection	
Sports Plus		French Open '05 Quarterfinals						Raceworld		World Greatest Auto Show		World Poker Tour ep 11 Goes Cruising				NASCAR MBNA 400 Dover			

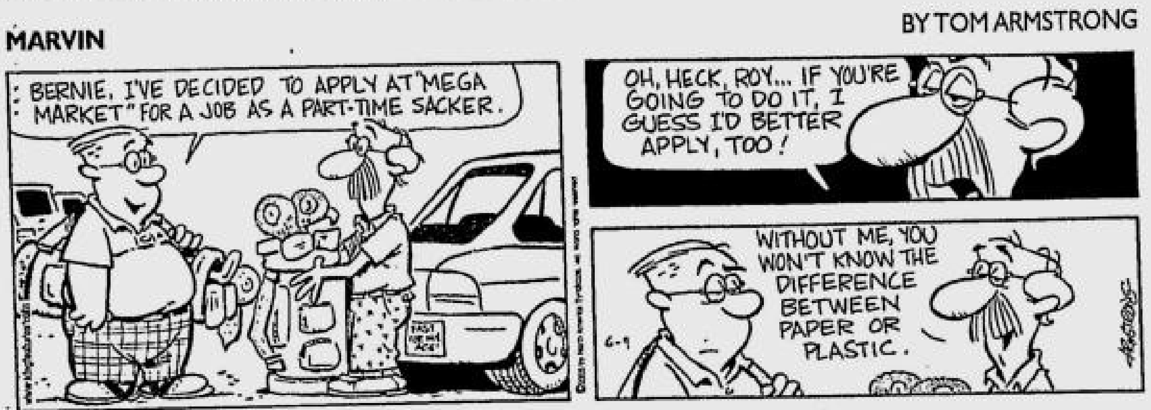
TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

Ang inyong tagapaghatid ng ulat-pangmulat
alas-10 ng gabi na! Tuwing Huwebes
Ating kabalitaan
Cheri Mercado
INQ TV
Dito lang sa
ABC

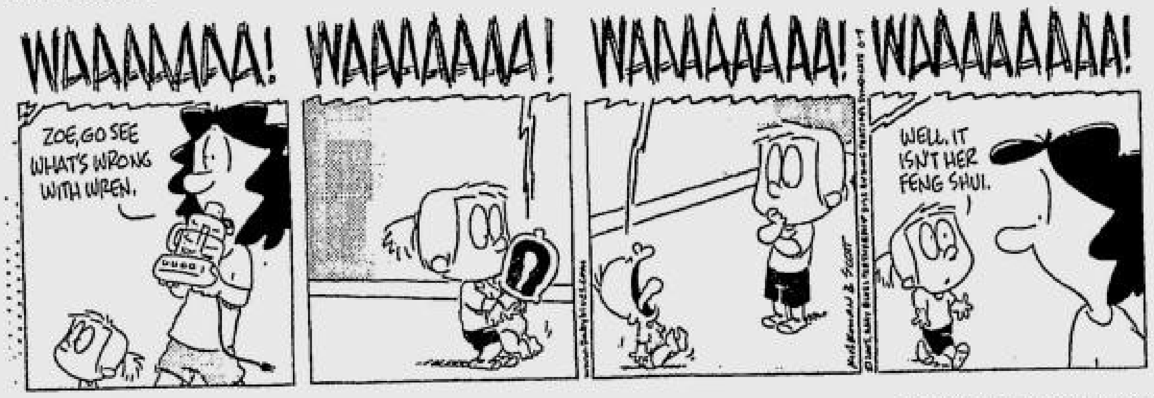
FOXTROT BY BILL AMEND


I'M REALLY NOT COMFORTABLE WITH THIS ONLINE POKER BUSINESS.
ANDY, RELAX.
I'M PLAYING IT TOTALLY SAFE.
TAKE THIS CURRENT HAND AS AN EXAMPLE: I WAS DEALT A MEASLY TWO-NINE OFF SUIT, SO I CLICKED THE BLUE "FOLD" BUTTON RIGHT AWAY.
ROGER, THE BLUE BUTTON SAYS "ALL IN."
WHOOPS. OK, LET'S USE THE NEXT HAND AS AN EXAMPLE...

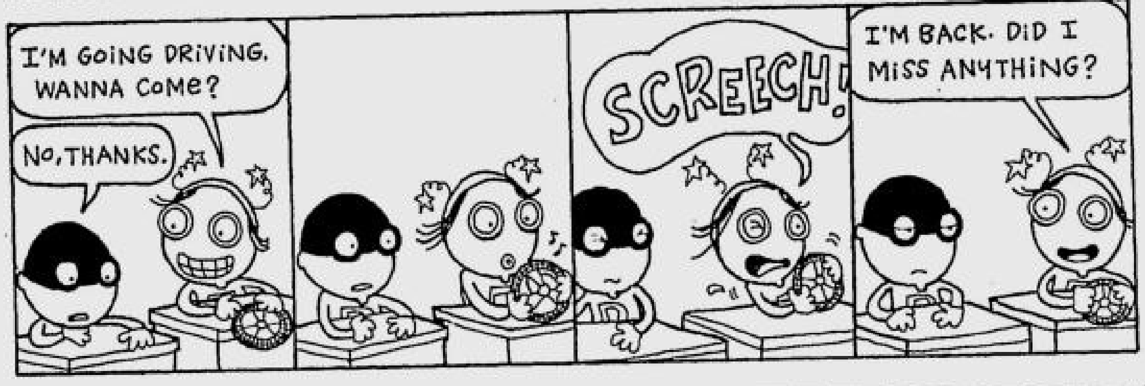
MARVIN BY TOM ARMSTRONG


BERNIE, I'VE DECIDED TO APPLY AT "MEGA MARKET" FOR A JOB AS A PART-TIME SACKER.
OH, HECK, ROY... IF YOU'RE GOING TO DO IT, I GUESS I'D BETTER APPLY, TOO!
WITHOUT ME, YOU WON'T KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PAPER OR PLASTIC.

BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


WAAAAAAA!
ZOE, GO SEE WHAT'S WRONG WITH WREN.
WAAAAAAA!
WAAAAAAAA!
WAAAAAAAA!
WELL, IT ISN'T HER FENG SHUI.

ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


I'M GOING DRIVING. WANNA COME?
NO, THANKS.
SCREECH!
I'M BACK. DID I MISS ANYTHING?

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're logical, intelligent and outspoken. In addition, you're flippant, witty and upbeat, as well as serious, committed and profound. (The classic dual Gemini.) People love your childlike side. In fact, many of you work with children. Work hard in the year ahead for rewards that will follow in 2006-07.
Birthdate of: Johnny Depp, actor; Natalie Portman, actress; Michael J. Fox, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): It's easy to have disputes and arguments with others today, especially siblings. Since anger only makes everyone miserable, try to avoid this. Demonstrate grace under pressure.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You want to get your way today about something connected with possessions or money. You might be able to do this; then again, you might not. In either case, be gracious.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): It's easy to feel irritated with others today. You'll especially feel this way with bosses, parents and authority figures. If you're wise, you'll avoid a fight. (Nobody really wins, anyhow.)

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You might feel irritable with others today and not know why. You don't want others telling you what to do. You feel very independent today.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Disagreements with friends or possibly with groups to which you might belong are likely today. The best way to handle this is to say as little as possible. Show tolerance to everyone.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You might not agree with your boss about how to use whatever resources are available. You have different ideas. No matter what you think, it's best if you zip your lip today.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You have strong opinions about religious or political matters today. You're prepared to fight for your views. However, shouting doesn't make people hear you better.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Arguments about the responsibilities for children or their management are possible today. You might also have a dispute about the division of labor about something. This is not a good day for these discussions.

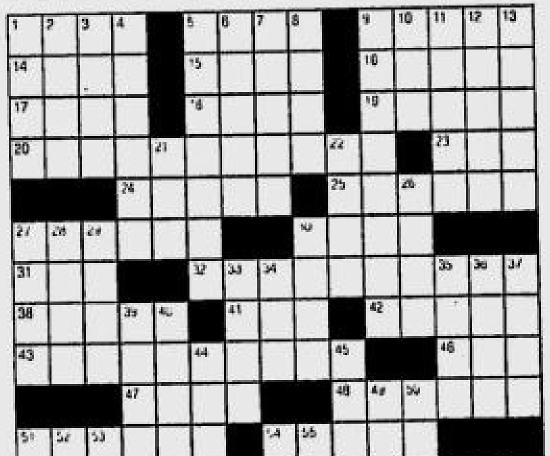
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You're inclined to feel touchy and irritable today, communication with partners is difficult. You're ready to tell somebody off. Chill out.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Disagreements at work could make you slightly accident-prone. You feel tension all around you. Don't push your views on others. Don't try to win a fight.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Lovers' quarrels are likely today. Avoid discussions if you can, simply because this is a day when everybody feels irritable.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Domestic squabbles can break out today. However, remember the old saying: It takes two to make a fight. If you refuse to get involved, you can promote peace in the family. (It takes just one person to set an example of peace and tolerance.)

DAILY CROSSWORD


By Alan P. Olschwang
Huntington Beach, CA
6/9/05

ACROSS
1 Charged particles
5 Sugar source
9 Supports
14 Happy starter?
15 Dieter's word
16 Hank of baseball
17 Volcanic outflow
18 Chills and fevers
19 Light olive brown
20 Start of quote by astronaut David Wolf from Mir
23 Vietnamese holiday
24 Places at the table
25 Theater employees
27 Homer's sea
30 Division word
31 Managed
32 Part 2 of quote
38 Lawn makeup
41 19th letter
42 Scandinavian
43 Part 3 of quote
46 Hardened
47 Holliman of "Police Woman"
48 Off the boat
51 Kind of hat
54 Colorful tropical fish
56 Pers. pension
57 End of quote
62 Roast host
64 Scottish Gaelic
65 Pouting grimace
66 Apple centers
67 Salacious stare
68 Water vessel
69 Put up
70 Fewer
71 Unit cost

DOWN
1 Anglesey or Skye
2 Norwegian saint
3 Church part
4 Meager
5 Egregious
6 "__ Days a Week"
7 Needle cases
8 Adolescent
9 Neighbor of Iran
10 Collegiate cheer
11 Sermonize
12 Hearth implement
13 States of agitation
21 Vote of endorsement
22 Sticky stuff
26 King of the road
27 Jason's ship
28 Deserve
29 Itsy-bitsy biter
30 Part of MIT
33 Make well
34 Neighbor of Syr.
35 Approximately
36 PC operator
37 Beret filler
39 Mets stadium
40 Most sordid
44 Notable times
45 Danbury madmen?
49 __ Lanka
50 "If I Had a __"
51 Cake cut
52 Knight's outfit
53 Mother-of-pearl
54 __ Mile Island
55 Comforts
58 In good health
59 Hawkeye State
60 Tallow source
61 Parched
63 Common Market abbr.

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

O	B	A	M	A	■	S	T	A	G	■	C	O	S	T
S	E	N	A	T	■	T	A	H	R	■	A	N	T	E
L	E	A	S	T	■	E	L	E	A	■	S	T	A	R
O	N	T	H	E	S	T	U	M	P	■	T	H	I	N
■	■	■	■	M	A	S	S	■	H	E	L	E	N	S
P	R	O	M	P	T	■	■	S	I	N	E	W	■	■
R	A	N	A	T	■	P	O	E	T	S	■	A	D	S
O	P	T	S	■	S	A	B	L	E	■	A	G	U	E
A	S	H	■	B	A	S	I	L	■	C	R	O	N	E
■	■	E	B	E	R	T	■	■	G	A	I	N	E	R
D	E	F	I	E	D	■	S	T	E	M	■	■	■	■
A	L	E	C	■	O	N	T	H	E	B	R	I	N	Y
F	I	N	K	■	N	O	R	A	■	E	E	R	I	E
F	A	C	E	■	I	V	A	N	■	R	I	A	T	A
Y	S	E	R	■	C	A	P	E	■	S	N	E	E	R

6/9/05

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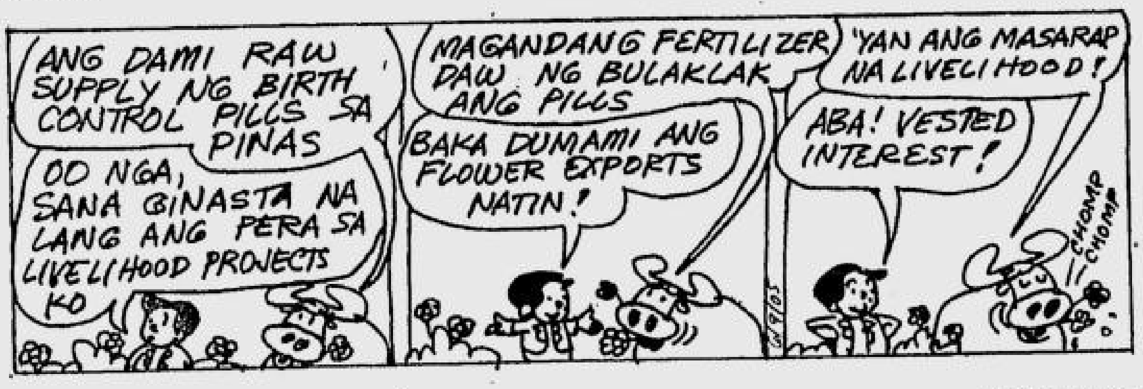
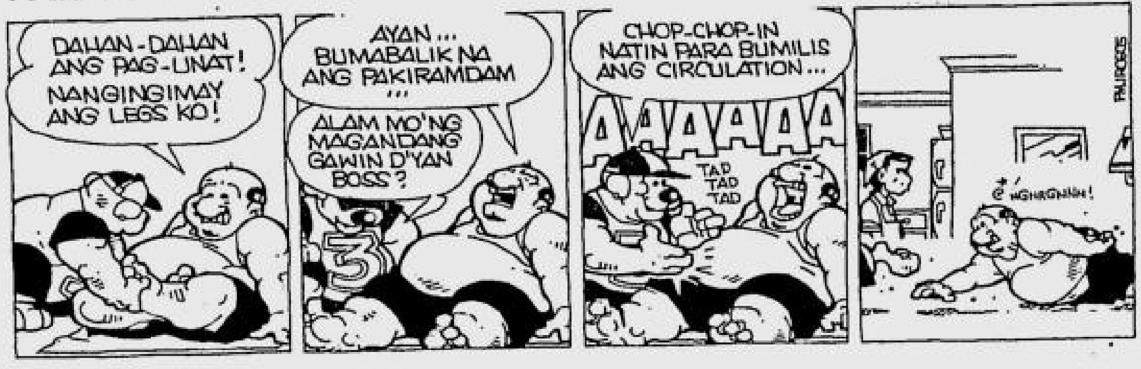
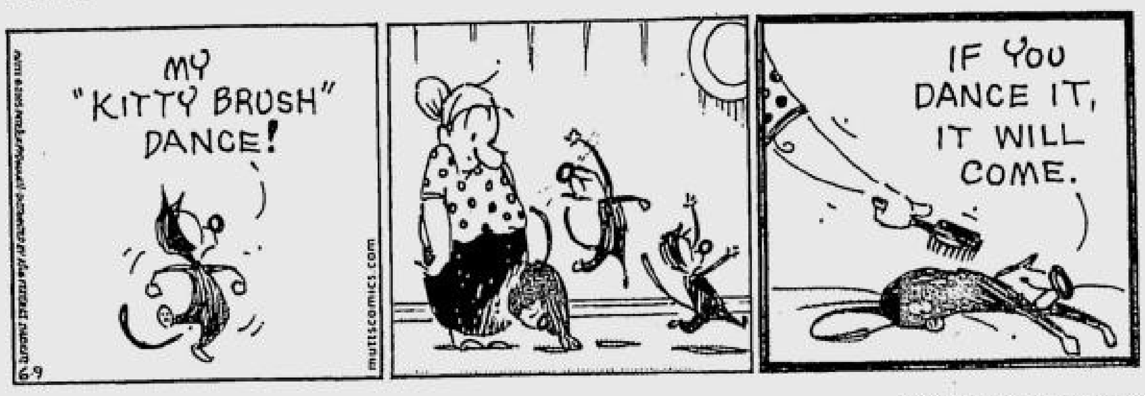
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


ANG DAMI RAW SUPPLY NG BIRTH CONTROL PILLS SA PINAS
OO NGA, SANA GINASTA NA LANG ANG PERA SA LIVELIHOOD PROJECTS KO
MAGANDANG FERTILIZER DAW NG BULAKLAK ANG PILLS
BAKA DUMAMI ANG FLOWER EXPORTS NATIN!
'YAN ANG MASARAP NA LIVELIHOOD!
ABA! VESTED INTEREST!
CHOMP CHOMP

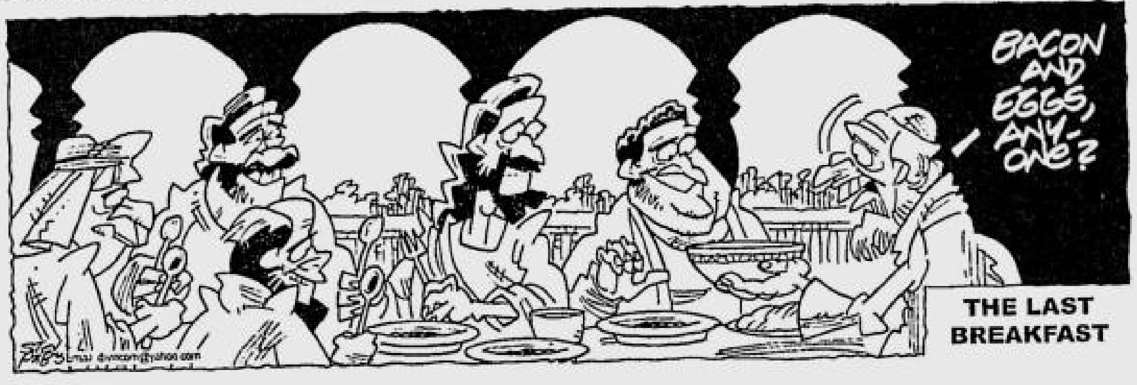
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


DAHAN-DAHAN ANG PAG-UNAT! NANGINGIMAY ANG LEGS KO!
AYAN... BUMABALIK NA ANG PAKIRAMDAM...
ALAM MO'NG MAGANDANG GAWIN D'YAN BOSS?
CHOP-CHOP-IN NATIN PARA BUMILIS ANG CIRCULATION...
AAAAAA
TAD TAD TAD

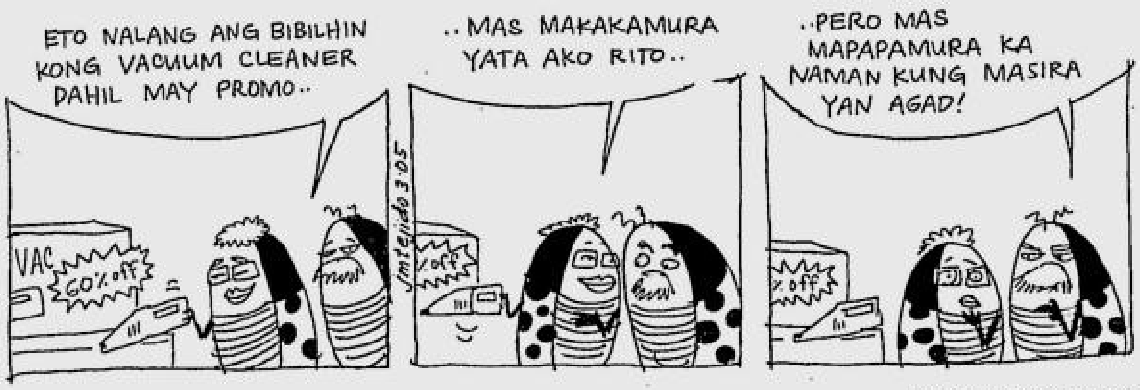
MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


MY "KITTY BRUSH" DANCE!
IF YOU DANCE IT, IT WILL COME.
mutts comics.com

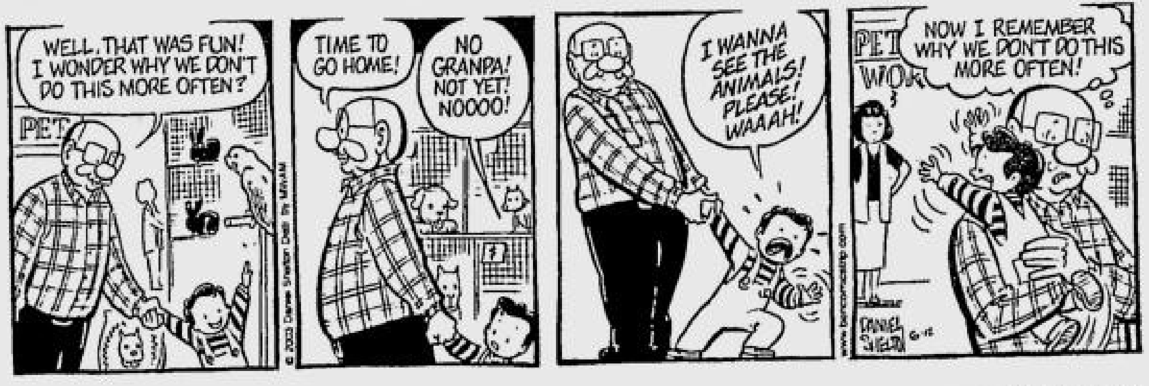
DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS


BACON AND EGGS, ANY-ONE?
THE LAST BREAKFAST

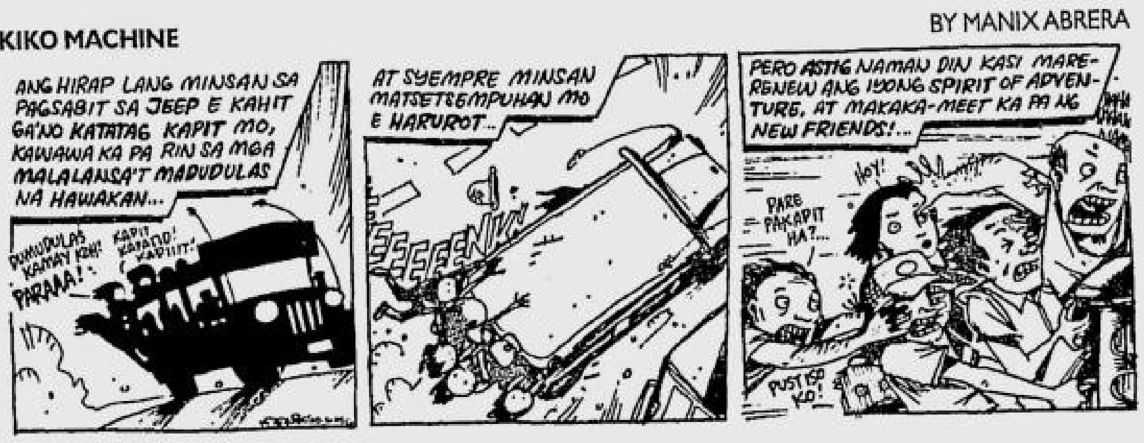
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


ETO NALANG ANG BIBILHIN KONG VACUUM CLEANER DAHIL MAY PROMO..
VAC 60% off
..MAS MAKAKAMURA YATA AKO RITO..
..PERO MAS MAPAPAMURA KA NAMAN KUNG MASIRA YAN AGAD!

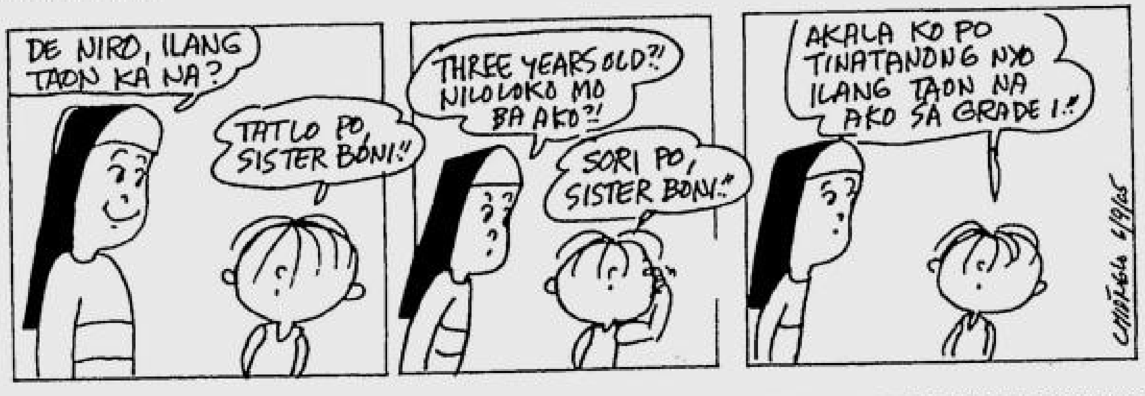
BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


WELL, THAT WAS FUN! I WONDER WHY WE DON'T DO THIS MORE OFTEN?
PET
TIME TO GO HOME!
NO GRANPA! NOT YET! NOOOO!
I WANNA SEE THE ANIMALS! PLEASE! WAAAH!
NOW I REMEMBER WHY WE DON'T DO THIS MORE OFTEN!

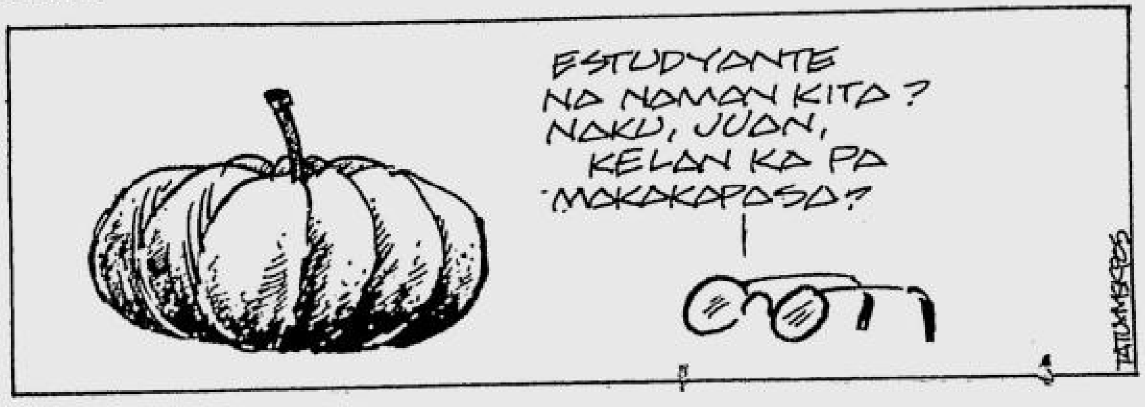
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


ANG HIRAP LANG MINSAN SA PAGSABIT SA JEEP E KAHIT GA'NO KATATAG KAPIT MO, KAWAWA KA PA RIN SA MGA MALALANSA'T MADUDULAS NA HAWAKAN...
DUMUDULAS KAMAY KO!
KAPIT KAPATID! KAPIIIT!
PARAAA!
AT SYEMPRE MINSAN MATSETSEMPUHAN MO E HARUROT...
EEEEENN!
PERO ASTIG NAMAN DIN KASI MARE-RENEW ANG IYONG SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE, AT MAKAKA-MEET KA PA NG NEW FRIENDS!...
HOY!
PARE PAKAPIT HA?...
PUSTISO KO!

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


DE NIRO, ILANG TAON KA NA?
TATLO PO, SISTER BONI!!
THREE YEARS OLD?! NILOLOKO MO BA AKO?!
SORI PO, SISTER BONI!!
AKALA KO PO TINATANONG NYO ILANG TAON NA AKO SA GRADE 1!!

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


ESTUDYANTE NA NAMAN KITA? NAKU, JUAN, KELAN KA PA MAKAKAPASA?

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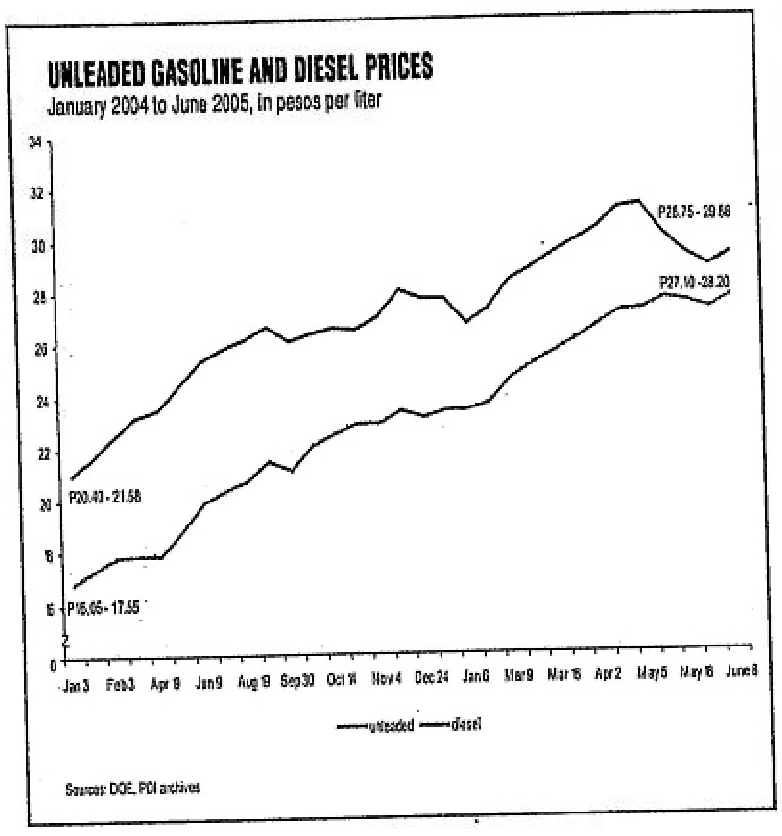
Major oil firms raise prices by 50¢ a liter


UNLEADED GASOLINE AND DIESEL PRICES
January 2004 to June 2005, in pesos per liter

Source: DOE, PDI archives

By Abigail L. Ho

AFTER implementing successive rollbacks last month, Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., Petron Corp. and Caltex Philippines Inc. raised gasoline, diesel and kerosene prices by 50 centavos a liter.

Shell's price increase took effect at noon yesterday, while that of Caltex was implemented at 12:01 a.m. today. Petron's price increases will be effective at 6 pm today.

Both companies attributed their price increases to the steady rise in crude and finished product prices in the world market in recent weeks.

According to documents from the Department of Energy, the benchmark Dubai crude soared to a June 1-7 average of $49.09 a barrel from the May average of $45.39.

The price of unleaded gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for refined petroleum products likewise climbed to $56.88 a barrel in the first seven days of June, up by more than $2 a barrel from $54.46 last month.

MOPS-based diesel also surged to an average of $67.84 a barrel in the June 1-7 period from only $62.74 in May.

Other oil firms, including refiner Petron Corp., have yet to make their own price adjustments as of press time.

Despite the fuel price increase, both Shell and Caltex committed to maintain diesel discounts for the public transport sector in selected stations nationwide.

Last month, oil companies reduced gasoline prices thrice by a total of P2.25 a liter. They also cut diesel prices once by 30-35 centavos a liter.

This was due to the softening in the prices of crude and refined petroleum products in the world market as compared with levels registered in April.

This month, however, international prices again started to climb.

Since the start of the year, gasoline prices have gone up nine times by a total of P4.85 a liter, while prices of diesel fuel have increased 10 times by a total of P5.05 a liter.

Premium unleaded gasoline now retails at between P29.20 and P31.17 a liter, diesel at between P26.65 and P28 a liter and kerosene at between,P28.20 and P29 a liter.

WHAT'S INSIDE

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SMC to buy up all shares of National Foods /B8

Bank lending up 5% in March /B2

6 sectors offered to foreigners

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE GOVERNMENT offered to liberalize six more service sectors during a meeting of trade ministers in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation held in South Korea last week.

Trade Secretary Juan B. Santos said the country offered to open up the sectors of computer and computer-related services, construction services, distribution (commission agents') services, energy services, and environmental services.

Santos added that the government also offered to further open up tourism services as part of its initial package of offers under the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS).

6 SECTORS/ B4

INDICATORS

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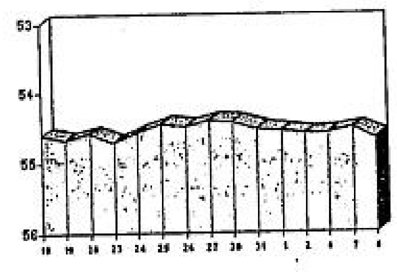


₱54.670 = $1

As of 5 p.m., June 8, 2005

¥106.74 = $1

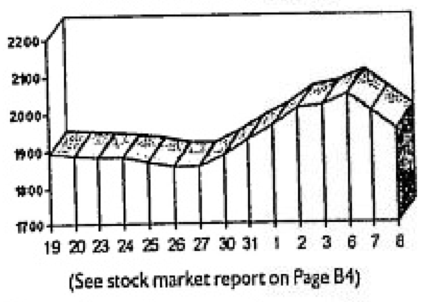
As of 5 p.m., June 8, 2005

GOLD: $426.80-427.30

per ounce Hong Kong, June 7, 2005

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B4)

Stocks down sharply on political worries

SHARE prices closed 2.48 percent lower yesterday in a sharp correction as investors continued to take profits on recent gains amid mounting political concerns, dealers said.

They said uncertainty arising from alleged attempts by the opposition to destabilize President Macapagal-Arroyo's government saw investors choosing to stay safe after a 7-day rally through Monday saw the market gain 10.3 percent.

Sentiment has been badly hit, with Ms Arroyo's popularity rating diving to 26 percent, a near 20-year low, as the Senate conducts public hearings on the alleged involvement of her husband and lawmaker-son in an ille-

STOCKS/ B4

VOL.1 ISSUE 1 JUNE 2005
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₱99,000 down for Ford Everest and Ford Escape
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Bank lending up 5% in March

By Michelle V. Remo

THE COUNTRY'S commercial banks posted a 5.1 percent lending growth in March, down from 5.8 percent year-on-year growth registered in February, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said yesterday.

Data from the BSP showed that commercial banks lent a total of P1.54 trillion in March this year, up from P1.45 trillion released in the same month last year.

The 5.8-percent growth in February represented the increase in bank lending during the month to P1.524 trillion from P1.44 trillion in February 2004.

A slowdown in the growth of bank lending is considered a reflection of a deceleration in the growth of the economy.

The economy registered slower growth in the first quarter mainly due to the continued rise in oil prices and the reduced demand for Philippine exports.

The country's gross domestic product (GDP) growth for the first quarter grew by only 4.6 percent, lower than the 6.4 percent recorded in the same period last year.

A slowdown in the growth of bank lending also reflects the reluctance of banks to lend and their preference to invest their money in more lucrative options.

A large part of the banks' funds is invested in government securities.

Short-term treasury bill rates have been declining in the past seven weekly auctions held by the Bureau of Treasury. This was attributed to the huge volume of offers from banks.

The government's domestic debt offerings through T-bills or treasury bonds had been oversubscribed in the past several auctions.

The 91-day T-bill rate recently breached the 6 percent level, dropping to 5.691 percent last Monday.

BSP data showed that of the P1.54 trillion lent by commercial banks in March, 26.9 percent went to financial, real estate and business services sectors.

The manufacturing industry followed with a 26.1-percent share, while the community, social and personal services sector had a 15.2-percent share.

The shares of the other sectors were as follows: wholesale and retail trade, 13.2 percent (P203 billion); agriculture, fisheries and forestry, 6.1 percent (P93.7 billion); transportation, storage and communication, 5 percent (P77 billion); electricity, gas and water, 4.6 percent (P70.8 billion); construction, 2.3 percent (P34.8 billion); and mining and quarrying, 0.8 percent (P11.7 billion).

Counting the cost of politics in the VAT law-2

By Paul R. Cooper

(Fourth of a series)

IF the matter wasn't so serious, it would be amusing.

Last year, Congress approved a measure exempting lawyers from value-added tax (VAT), but the language of which created confusion and certain problems that were "corrected" by the Bureau of Internal Revenue administratively.

This year, Congress removed the problem by successfully bringing lawyers back into the VAT base. However, Congress has created other problems affecting the government itself.

Many contractors may already be wondering whether contracting with the government is worth the effort, after recent executive initiatives that make tax clearances a prerequisite for any government contract. A new "final" withholding may now encourage those who are still persevering to reconsider. The bottom line: The government can expect to pay more for goods and services once the VAT measure takes effect.

Gov't caught by its own sting

One of the stranger measures introduced in the bicameral conference was the requirement for the government and its agencies, including government-owned and -controlled corporations (GOCCs), to deduct a final 5 percent VAT from payments for goods and services, or 10 percent if the payment was for the lease of property from a non-resident. The consequences of which are the following:

- The government will end up paying more for goods and services. From a businessman's perspective, the special 5-percent rate should not cause any pricing problems. The law prevents the government from obtaining goods and services without going through a tendering process, so persons bidding for a procurement or supply contract can price the VAT into their bids.
- GOCCs will be made less competitive. They will pay more for their inputs, they presumably will not be able to claim input tax credits for the withholding VAT (isn't that the effect of a "final" tax?), and will still be liable to 10-percent output VAT on their sales. That amounts to a fair bit of VAT (more than the normal 10 percent, because of the cascading effect of the taxes) in their final sales price.

Enter the lawyers (again). What does the law really mean by "final" VAT? Under Section 110(A), "any input tax evidenced by a VAT invoice or official receipt ... shall be creditable against the output tax." If a business makes VAT-exempt sales, there is a special rule in Section 110 that apportions input taxes and has the effect of disallowing input tax credits relating to VAT-exempt sales. There is, however, no corresponding rule dealing with sales subject to a 5-percent final VAT. If Section 110 is read strictly, it could be interpreted to allow a person making sales to the government to claim a full input tax credit. It could also be interpreted to allow GOCCs to claim an input tax credit for the 5 percent final withholding VAT.

How does one reconcile the 5 percent final withholding VAT with Section 110? At a technical level, the answer is that if the law is ambiguous, one looks to the intent of the drafters to derive the meaning. That works fine in a transparent lawmaking process. It does not work so well if there is no public record of the trade-offs that have been made in political dealings. Ultimately, the BIR will probably have to make a line call in the regulations; not an ideal way for a law to be created.

Debates will continue for years on when exactly the VAT rate increases.

Standby authority

This leads us to the really interesting, and contentious, issue of the President's standby authority. First, we need to get one thing straight. The President has no authority. The buck stops with the secretary of finance. If he recommends the rate increase, the President has no choice, she "shall" increase the rate to 12 percent. So who will really catch the political fallout from an increase? The words, "I had no choice in the matter," come to mind.

One of the interesting things about the standby authority is that it may mean all things to all people. This can be useful in a consensus environment. It allows a measure to proceed, while the participants can sit back later and say, with all honesty, "that's not what I understood the provision would do when I agreed with it."

The provision in question reads: "Provided, that the President, upon the recommendation of the secretary of finance, shall, effective Jan. 1, 2006, raise the rate of value-added tax to 12 percent, after any of the following conditions has been satisfied: (i) Value-added tax as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) of the previous year exceeds two and four-fifth percent (2 4/5 percent) or (ii) the national government's deficit as a percentage of GDP of the previous year exceeds one and one-half percent (1 1/2 percent).

Undoubtedly the intention was that sometime after Jan. 1, 2006, once the National Accounts for 2005 have been finalized, the secretary of finance will be able to sit back, confirm that the criteria is met (nobody has any doubt that the deficit will exceed 1.5 percent of GDP this year), and recommend the increase. Thus, the new rate could not kick in until sometime toward the middle of next year.

Undoubtedly the intention was also that sometime before Jan. 1, 2006, possibly even as early as July 1, 2005, when the new law will become effective, the secretary of finance will be able to sit back, confirm that the criteria is met (the data already confirms the deficit for last year [2004] exceeded 1.5 percent of GDP), and recommend the increase. Thus, the new rate will apply starting Jan. 1, 2006.

It all depends on which side of the fence you sit. Who will win? Based on the drafting of the law, the rate should apply from Jan. 1, 2006. In my view, the word "effective" is connected with when the new rate will take effect, not when the President may exercise the "authority." As the new law takes effect on July 1, 2005, the secretary of finance any time between July 1, 2005 and Dec. 31, 2005 could recommend the increase, based on the implementation criteria being met for 2004.

For the record, undoubtedly the intention was that sometime after Jan. 1, 2006, the secretary of finance will be able to sit back, confirm that the criteria is met, and recommend the increase, retroactive to Jan. 1, 2006. That way, the government could sting the business community for an additional 2 percent output VAT (under the law, businesses are liable to account for output VAT, whether they bill it or not) without having to grant a corresponding adjustment for input tax (nobody will hold the requisite invoices or official receipts to support a claim for input tax at the higher rate). No, I don't really believe this could happen—it is reasonable to expect the Supreme Court, in three to four years time, to confirm that such an act is not constitutional because it amounts to retroactive legislation. But in an environment when the attitude of the executive branch to tax collections seems to be to capture as much tax as it can find without regard to the economic consequences (and occasionally the legalities of the practices being pursued) does give one cause to wonder, in fleeting moments, if the government could stoop to such underhanded tactics.

Where to from here?

The question might be better phrased as, "When will we learn?"

It should be clear to any observer that the Philippine tax system is not working, this is one of the reasons the VAT bill was initiated. Congress must also take some of the blame for passing measures that are far less precise than they might be. The last article in this series will look at whether an effective and transparent process be established to enable coherent tax laws to be passed in the Philippines.

(The author is a tax expert and a director of PricewaterhouseCoopers)

DTI promoting halal food business

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry urged Mindanao-based exporters to consider going into the halal food business as a way of boosting exports to the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East Asia Growth Area.

Created in 1994, BIMP-Eaga groups Brunei Darussalam; Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Maluku and Irian Jaya in Indonesia; Sabah, Sarawak and Labuan in Malaysia; and Mindanao and Palawan in the Philippines.

DTI data show that Mindanao exports to BIMP-Eaga grew by a quarter in the last five years to $52.45 million in 2004 from $41.97 million in 2000.

Glenn Peñaranda, executive director of the DTI's foreign trade service corps, said exporters who have so far focused on shipping out raw materials should be persistent in moving up the value chain.

Peñaranda said companies could go into processed fruits, vegetables, agri-marine products, gifts and housewares, and construction materials.

Also, the official said exporters must ensure the quality of their products and meet the requirements set by market abroad.

He said that, for example, exporters must obtain halal certification as countries within the region have large Muslim populations or halal-consuming markets.

WIWAG business training seminars for students held

The Education for Youth Enterprise (EYE) Foundation, Inc. concluded a series of WIWAG Business Management Simulation Training Programs for students of the Bulacan State University (BSU), the Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT), the University of Southeastern Philippines (USP) in Davao City, and the Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University (DMMMSU) in Bacnotan, La Union.

The WIWAG Business Management Simulation Training Program is a computer-assisted business simulation game that provides participants a holistic view of the different departments in a business organization and how they dynamically interrelate to drive the business enterprise to succeed.

The WIWAG is supported by Holcim Philippines, Inc. It is being implemented through the EYE Foundation, which was created solely for this project. Interested companies can participate in WIWAG by sponsoring student training in their school of choice and volunteering managers to become trainors.

For inquiries please contact Ms. Elaine Mapa, Executive Director of the EYE Foundation, L3 PHINMA Plaza, Rockwell Center, Makati City; Tel nos. 8700165 or 8981980; Fax no. 8700498.

MoA Signings

Mr. Orlando Almuete and Mr. Jose Sanchez, Chancellor and Director-Student Affairs, respectively, of DMMMSU, and La Union Plant Manager James Descallar.

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Bulacan Plant Manager Julius Yballe and Director Mariano de Jesus of BSU.

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Top: Mr. Hans Goestch of the Ernst Schmidheiny Foundation; bottom: Ms. Elaine G. Mapa, Executive Director of the EYE Foundation.

Mr. Miguel S. Martinez, , Dean, College of Business Administration of MSU-IIT and Lugait plant Mining Services, Environmental CSR Manager Julius Baliog.

Davao Plant Manager Ednel Pascual and Ms. Julieta Ortiz, President of USP.

La Union

Volunteer instructors Bong Bustos of HPI La Union and Cocoy Evangelista of UCPB-CIIF.

Bulacan

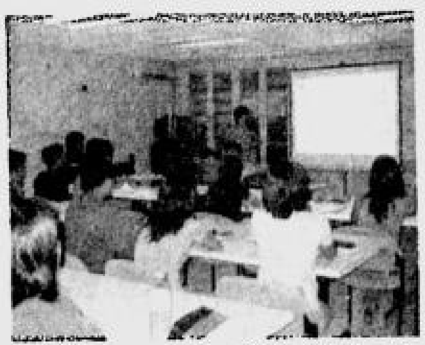
Volunteer instructors Joe Wilson of HPI Bulacan and Noemi Adan of Sarmiento Foundation with Bruno Gmunder, WIWAG consultant from Switzerland.

Lugait

Hans Goestch (middle) and volunteer instructors Jun Cordero of HPI Lugait and Susan Jo of Petron (both at right).

Davao

Volunteer instructor Chem Pacano, Executive Director of the League of Corporate Foundations.



A lecture on reading financial reports.

The WIWAG graduating class from BSU.

The WIWAG graduates from MSU-IIT.

in business education

Volunteer instructor Harold Soriaga of HPI Davao.

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

DOF seeks uniform perks for ecozone locators

By Michelle V. Remo and Vincent Cabreza,
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance is proposing the crafting of a law that will grant uniform fiscal incentives to all economic zone locators.

Such a move, the DOF believes, will help resolve the dispute between the Bases Conversion Development Authority and the Camp John Hay Development Corp. (CJHDevco)

The DOF, the agency tasked to manage the government's fiscal sector, is expected to immediately order the collection of taxes and duties from CJHDevco following a Supreme Court ruling withdrew the incentives granted to the Camp John Hay developer.

"I emphasize that we (DOF) respect the SC ruling but we are looking at issues of fairness, given that these investors were encouraged to set up there (ecozones) on the basis of tax exemptions," Finance Undersecretary Emmanuel Bonoan said in an interview with reporters.

BCDA is running after CJHDevCo for more than P2.2 billion in unpaid rent, but the developer said it would only settle the liability if the government would live up to its commitment to provide incentives. CJHDevCo was insisting that in its agreement with the BCDA, the developer should pay a tax of only 5 percent of gross income tax in lieu of other taxes, and should have duty-free privileges.

But the SC ruling said the BCDA was wrong in granting the fiscal incentives. The high court said only locators in Subic were entitled to the fiscal incentive of paying only 5-percent gross income tax in lieu of all other taxes. The finance official said that to avoid tension between investors and the government, a bill granting uniform fiscal incentives to all ecozone locators should be passed. He also suggested that the bill should contain a provision on retroactivity so that the liabilities of CJHDevCo could be removed.

In a meeting with the DOF, officials of the BCDA and the Philippine Economic Zone Authority acknowledged the importance of harmonizing all economic zone benefits.

Because Camp John Hay no longer enjoys its own set of incentives, its developer had proposed the registration of the former American rest and recreation center with the Peza.

Electric co-ops trim system loss to 14.3%

By Abigail L. Ho

THE COUNTRY'S 119 electric cooperatives registered a national average system loss of 14.34 percent in the first quarter of the year, down from the 14.43 percent in December last year.

National Electrification Administration chief Edita Bueno expressed confidence that electric cooperatives nationwide would be able to achieve their 14-percent average system loss target by the end of the year.

Also, the electric cooperatives' average system loss could be down to just a single digit by 2010, as committed to President Macapagal-Arroyo during a convention last year, she added.

She said the system loss reduction meant that electric cooperatives had become more efficient. The reduction translates to savings for them, which put co-ops in a better position to rehabilitate and upgrade their lines and, in turn, improve their services.

Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said this was a big step in the right direction as this meant better power distribution services in the rural areas.

"Cutting down system losses will help provide quality, reliable and cheaper electricity service, especially in the countryside," he said in a statement yesterday.

"A number of electric cooperatives have shown the way. I challenge our other cooperatives to bring down system loss and further improve their performance as earlier urged by President Arroyo," he added.

Gov't urged to classify forest lands

THE GOVERNMENT was urged to classify forest lands into specific production and protection areas.

This was contained in a resolution passed by the multi-sectoral participants in the recently concluded Philippine Forestry Development Forum. The resolution was submitted to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Senate President Franklin Drilon and House Speaker Jose de Venecia.

Forum participants said the Constitution, specifically Sec. 4 of Article XII, provided for the establishment by law of the specific limits of forest lands.

The forum convenors—led by the Phil. Wood Producers Association (PWPA), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Asian Development Bank, the UP Los Baños College of Forestry and Natural Resources and the Society of Filipino Foresters Inc.—stressed the need for "the delineation of forest boundaries and complete demarcation of those considered as national parks and watershed areas as against those reserved for wood production."

The resolution stressed that the identification and allocation of forest lands appropriate for the establishment of industrial tree plantation would make the country self sufficient in timber in due time.

It also urged Congress to pass the Sustainable Forest Management bill and National Land-Use Code, which were pending in the legislature, "to ensure the growth of the forest-based sector in providing economic and environmental benefits to society, and promote effective forest protection and governance."

The inability of Congress to pass these bills has stunted the development of the wood industry for what is being implemented now is the obsolete 30-year old Revised Forestry Code.

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Lopez unit to bid for $500-M project

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

FIRST PHILIPPINE Holdings Corp., the holding company for the toll road management and power generation units of the Lopez Group, plans to make a bid for the government's $500-million Subic-Clark-Tarlac expressway project.

FPHC chair Oscar Lopez yesterday announced during a stockholders' meeting that the FPHC is "prepared to bid" for the 94.5-kilometer Subic-Clark-Tarlac expressway project to operate and manage the toll road under the terms to be released by the Bases Conversion Development Authority expected in the third quarter of 2005.

"Hopefully this will encourage economic activity and increase volume of traffic on the North Luzon Expressway," said Elpidio L. Ibañez, FPHC president. "I think it is time to spur development."

FPHC has a 51-percent stake in First Philippine Infrastructure Development Corp. (FPIDC), its holding company for the tollway business.

FPIDC in turn owns 67 percent of the Manila North Tollways Corp., the operator of the recently rehabilitated 84-kilometer North Luzon Expressway.

Commercial operations for NLE began February this year after MNTC completed the $370-million rehabilitation of the toll road.

Ibañez said certain parties, like First Pacific Co. Ltd. of Hong Kong, have already expressed interest in acquiring its 51 percent in MNTC, but he said FPHC did not pursue negotiations with First Pacific.

Ibañez also said it may fund its own bid to operate the Subic-Clark–Tarlac Expressway or strike up a deal with other possible investors.

FPHC has obtained a $25-million loan and is poised to raise new funds worth about $300 million from a planned public offering of shares in First Generation Holdings.

First Gen is the holding company of the Lopez Group for its power and energy-related businesses.

First Gen's subsidiaries include First Gas Power Corp., which owns a 1,000-MW natural gas-fired plant, and FGP Corp., which operates a 500-MW power plant. Both plants are located in Batangas.

First Gen is 88.4-percent owned by First Philippine Holdings.

US firm sets up system for OFW remittances

THE TECHNOLOGY solutions firm Rechargeplus Ltd. has invested $2 million to establish in the Philippines a convenient and inexpensive system of receiving remittances from overseas Filipino workers.

Rechargeplus, which is based in the United States, yesterday said that the new remittance system would bring down the cost of sending and receiving remittances to as low as $1 each for international transactions and P1 for domestic transactions.

The new system will be launched on Sunday.

Brett Radford, co-founder and chief operating officer of Rechargeplus, said the system would be using a "prepaid debit card platform," which would allow an individual to receive remittances using a card that can be secured from the partner-banks of the US firm.

Under the system, the recipient of a remittance would be alerted through text messaging that a certain amount of fund has been placed in his or her account. Using the card, the recipient could either withdraw the cash from automated teller machines or use the card in making purchases.

The reduced cost of fund transfers would encourage more OFWs to send remittances via legal channels.

Michelle V. Remo

RP expects to firm up trade with China

By Ronnel W. Domingo

A TRADE mission from Beijing is expected to arrive today for a two-day meeting that would further strengthen economic relations between the country and China.

Trade Undersecretary Thomas G. Aquino said the 24th joint trade committee meeting would be held in time with the celebration of the 30th year of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Beijing and Manila.

Aquino said the meeting was also the first bilateral economic talks following President Hu Jintao's state visit to the country earlier this year.

"To meet the 20-member team from China, we have put together a panel composed of officials from the departments of agriculture, foreign affairs, transportation and communication, energy, environment and natural resources; as well as those from the National Economic and Development Authority and the Mindanao Economic Development Council," Aquino said.

He said that during the JTC talks, joint working groups on infrastructure and mining would be convened for the first time to pursue initiatives under agreements that were signed recently.

In particular, an RP-China memorandum of understanding on mining was signed during the Philippine mining investment roadshow in Beijing last January, while an MOU on infrastructure was inked when Hu visited in April.

Aquino said the agenda of the 24th JTC meeting also included further joint activities in Mindanao and Palawan; promotion of Philippine products in China; and the assurance of a steady supply of coal from China.

During Hu's state visit, bilateral agreements had been firmed up regarding the North Rail project, economic technical cooperation, and on Beijing's concessional loan of $25-million for the acquisition of China-made X-ray machines to be used by port authorities.

Data from the Department of Trade and Industry showed that trade with China grew steadily to $3.94 billion in 2003 from $1.61 billion in 1999.

Exports to China grew by an average of 39.7 percent a year to $2.14 billion in 2003 from $575 million in 1999.

In the same period, imports increased by 16.9 percent a year, reaching about $1.79 billion in 2003.

According to the DTI, the country achieved trade surplus—posted at $350 million in 2003—for the third time since 1976 when active commercial relations with China was revived.

6 sectors offered to foreigners

From page B1

He explained that the meeting of Apec Ministers Responsible for Trade (Apec MRT) was held in preparation for the upcoming World Trade Organization's Sixth Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong in December.

Apec members include Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, the United States and Vietnam.

Santos said he also presented in the Apec MRT meeting the country's priorities of obtaining new market access for its products while preserving needed flexibilities for special products in the agriculture sector.

"(I also told them about our interest in) preserving policy space in the industrial goods sector, also known as NAMA or non-agriculture market access," he said.

The trade chief added that in line with the opening up of the local mining industry to foreign investment, the country's offers regarding the GATS covered construction and energy services that were incidental to mining.

These include "major new opportunities" in the construction and engineering of long-distance pipelines as well as communication and power lines, Santos said.

Stocks . . .

From page B1

gal numbers game protection racket.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index shed 49.74 points to 1,953.28 after trading between 1,942.60 and 2,003.02. Turnover was 616 million shares worth P1.68 billion.

The broader all-shares index fell 23.15 points to 1,190.37.

Losers outpaced gainers 79 to 14, with 29 stocks unchanged.

"The decline has accelerated and the market has fallen sharply. There appears to be no sign of a slowdown," said Lawrence de Leon of Accord Capital Equities.

However, some dealers said the correction was healthy as it would allow investors to buy stocks at cheaper prices and so prepare the market for another rally.

"Recent events on the political front have forced investors to lighten up on certain trades and stay on the sidelines," said Jonathan Ravelas of Banco De Oro Universal Bank.

"Hopefully, when the dust settles, investors will start coming back on the basis that improving economic and fiscal fundamentals will remain the same," Ravelas said.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., the most active stock yesterday, lost P55 to P1,535. Globe Telecom retreated P35 to P830. *AFP*

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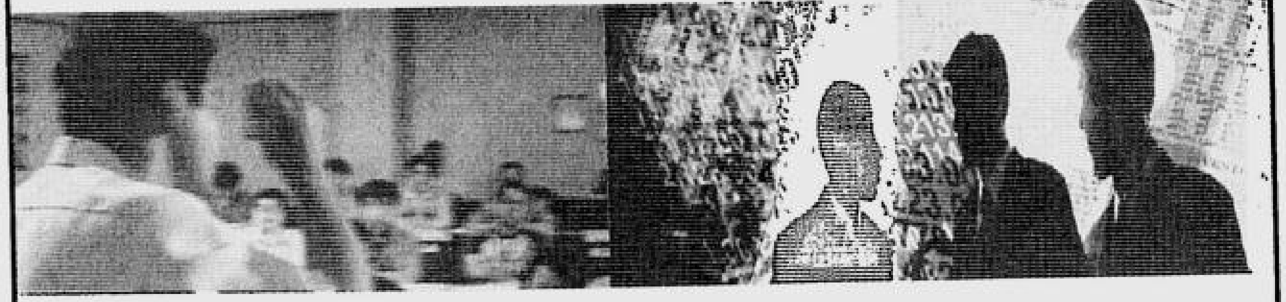

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- Channel Relationship Marketing

III. Sales and Distribution Operations
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- Performance Standards and Incentive Scheme

IV. Distributor Operations
- Designing the Distribution Infrastructure
- Perfect Order Delivery
- Distribution Controls and Management Information Systems

V. Distribution Finance
- Understanding Distribution Finance
- Sourcing, Allocating and Using Funds
- Working Capital and Capital Investment Management

VI. Building Businesses and Brands
- Evaluating Principals and Products
- Beyond Distribution: Co-Brand Building
- Beyond Distribution: Business Value Creation

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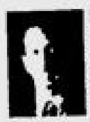
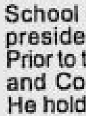


PROF. EDUARDO A. MORATÓ JR., DPA
Dr. Morato championed the establishment of AIM's Asian Center for Entrepreneurship and the Center for Development Management. He was the Dean of AIM (2000-2002) and Dean of the AIM W. SyCip Graduate School of Business (2002-2004). As a consultant and trainor for multinationals and large local companies, he was involved in the development of distributors and their organizations. Currently, he is teaching courses on Subcontracting, Outsourcing, Franchising and Distribution at AIM.



PROF. ELI P. SANTOS, Ph.D.
Prof. Santos is an expert in management, strategic leadership and planning, and organizational improvement. A member of the core faculty of the AIM W. SyCip Graduate School of Business, he is also the co-founder and president of Foremost CPG Brands Corporation. Prior to this, he was the president and CEO of Marsman and Co., president of Macondray Distribution Co. He holds a doctorate in Organizational Development from the Southeast Asia Interdisciplinary Development Institute and an MBA from De La Salle University.

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For Inquiries and reservation call:
Ms. Lorna Balina, or Ms. Liza Ayalde
Tel +632 892-4011 to 25 ext. 356, 252
Telefax +632 813-3302

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EQUIS

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of June 8, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	32	33	32	32	593,300
Bank of the Phil. Islands	49.5	49.5	48.5	49.5	4,039,000
Citystate Savings Bank	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	300
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.64	0.64	0.61	0.62	420,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	50.5	50.5	48.5	48.5	127,800
International Exch. Bank	18.75	18.75	18.75	18.75	5,700
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	32	32.5	31	31.5	512,600
Prudential Bank	400	400	400	400	150
Philippine National Bank	33.5	33.5	33	33	47,200
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	11	11	11	11	10,800
Security Bank Corp.	29	29	29	29	12,300
Union Bank of the Phil.	28	28.5	28	28.5	141,100
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Filipino Fund Inc.	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	1,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	2520	2520	2520	2520	990
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	452,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1740	1765	1740	1760	4,500
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	12	12	11.5	12	32,100
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.1	1.12	1.08	1.12	2,550,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	865	865	830	830	97,860
Ipeople Inc.	3.5	3.5	3.35	3.4	111,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.0525	0.0525	0.0525	0.0525	100,000
Liberty Telecoms Holdings	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	50,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.35	3.35	3.2	3.3	862,000
Transpacific Broadcast	1.38	1.38	1.38	1.38	25,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1575	1575	1535	1535	503,960
Ivantage Corp.	0.68	0.68	0.67	0.67	1,540,000
Philweb Corp.	0.018	0.019	0.017	0.018	37,900,000
POWER, ENERGY & OTHER UTILITIES					
Manila Electric Co. A	16.5	16.5	16.25	16.25	19,000
Manila Electric Co. B	24	24.5	24	24.5	316,000
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.7	6.7	6.4	6.6	5,106,000
Petron Corp.	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.25	5,808,000
Salcon Power Corp.	2	2	2	2	50,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.18	1.18	1.16	1.16	390,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	120,000
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	15,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	7.8	7.9	7.8	7.9	1,123,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.65	0.67	0.65	0.67	400,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	55,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.63	0.63	0.61	0.61	810,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	3.6	3.65	3.5	3.5	1,056,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.2	3.25	3.2	3.2	140,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	31.5	31.5	31.5	31.5	4,400
Jollibee Foods Corp.	30	30	29	30	322,600
San Miguel Corp. A	58.5	58.5	58	58.5	26,700
San Miguel Corp. B	91.5	91.5	89	90	25,900
Universal Robina Corp.	15.25	15.5	15.25	15.25	59,500
Vitarich Corp.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	100,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	46,000,000
Ayala Corp.	357.5	357.5	347.5	355	62,350
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.49	0.49	0.49	0.49	60,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	5	5.2	4.9	5	1,878,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.033	0.034	0.033	0.034	25,600,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.1	2.1	2.06	2.06	2,050,000
APC Group Inc.	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	160,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	1,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.34	730,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	15,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	12	12	12	12	3,000
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.155	0.16	0.155	0.16	560,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.16	1.18	1.12	1.14	38,008,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.16	0.17	800,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	550,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.31	0.32	0.31	0.32	1,160,000
Omci Holdings Inc.	2.75	2.75	2.7	2.7	1,093,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.033	0.033	0.033	0.033	300,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.22	1.22	1.22	1.22	100,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	8.9	8.9	8.7	8.8	895,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	49.5	50	47.5	49	1,064,100
Global Equities Inc.	0.0875	0.09	0.0875	0.09	1,700,000
House of Investments Inc.	1.18	1.18	1.18	1.18	350,000
Ionics Inc.	1.22	1.22	1.22	1.22	109,000
Macroasia Corp.	1.94	1.94	1.9	1.9	85,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.46	1.46	1.4	1.44	5,737,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.37	0.38	0.37	0.38	18,280,000
Polar Property Holdings	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	17,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.98	130,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.51	0.51	0.51	0.51	100,000
SM Investments Corp.	252.5	255	252.5	255	363,310
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.195	0.195	0.195	0.195	3,150,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.225	760,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Music Semiconductors Corp	1.2	1.24	1.2	1.24	103,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	1,000,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Bella Corp.	1.22	1.22	1.18	1.2	6,123,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.81	0.81	0.81	0.81	150,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.18	1.2	5,973,000
Manila Jockey Club	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	15,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.31	0.31	0.3	0.3	1,250,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp.(Pdr)	11.5	11.75	11.25	11.5	4,548,400
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	8.1	8.1	7.7	7.9	9,298,000
Cityland Development Corp.	1.52	1.54	1.52	1.54	550,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1	1	0.96	0.96	290,000
C&P Homes Inc.	0.27	0.28	0.27	0.27	2,650,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.225	0.225	0.215	0.225	1,870,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.39	0.39	0.38	0.39	6,230,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.52	1.52	1.44	1.44	6,142,000
Gotesco Land. Inc.	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.11	200,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	2,120,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	300,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	4.85	4.85	4.85	4.85	10,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.19	0.195	0.19	0.195	360,000
SM Development Corp.	1.46	1.5	1.46	1.5	264,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.9	7.9	7.6	7.7	2,207,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	70,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0085	0.0085	0.0075	0.0075	64,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	5.9	6	5.4	5.6	2,991,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	3	3	3	3	69,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	4,450,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.35	0.35	0.34	0.34	6,380,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.015	0.015	0.015	0.015	82,500,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.021	0.021	0.021	0.021	29,500,000
Omico Corp.	0.0065	0.0065	0.006	0.0065	51,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.97	0.97	0.96	0.96	1,200,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.16	1.16	1.1	1.1	3,318,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	32.5	32.5	32	32	352,900
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	200,000
OIL					
Interport Res. B	0.005	0.005	0.005	0.005	5,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	72,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	250,000
Pacifica	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.011	16,100,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	2.38	2.38	2.38	2.38	10,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	5,150,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.28	0.3	0.28	0.3	290,000

DISCLOSURES

SOUTHEAST Asia Cement Holdings Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on June 29, 9 a.m. at Mandarin Oriental Manila, Makati City. Stockholders of record as of June 9 are entitled to notice and vote at the meeting..

* * *

MANILA Bulletin Publishing Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on July 14, 10 a.m. at Philippine Columbian Association, Plaza Dilao, Paco, Manila. Stockholders of record as of June 30 are entitled to notice and vote at the meeting.

* * *

ELECTED directors of **Cityland Development Corp.** were Washington Sycip, former Sen. Vicente T. Paterno, Stephen C. Roxas, Andrew I. Liuson, Grace C. Liuson, Helen C. Roxas, Alice C. Gohoc and Peter Dee.

* * *

PHILIPPINE Seven Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on June 21, 3 p.m. at Holiday Inn Galleria, Ortigas Center, Pasig City. Stockholders of record as of May 3 are entitled to vote at the meeting. ***Compiled by Erika A. Sarmiento, PDI Research***

CURRENCIES

June 8, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.814067	1.000000	54 5640
Japan	Yen	0.007639	0.009384	0.5120
United Kingdom	Pound	1.493732	1.834900	100.1195
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.104624	0.128520	7.0126
Switzerland	Franc	0.653711	0.803019	43.8159
Canada	Dollar	0.654237	0.803665	43.8512
Singapore	Dollar	0.490372	0.602373	32.8679
Australia	Dollar	0.626350	0.769408	41.9820
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.159444	2.652661	144.7398
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.217113	0.266702	14.5523
Brunei	Dollar	0.488900	0.600565	32.7692
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Thailand	Baht	0.020103	0.024694	1.3474
UAE	Dirham	0.221671	0.272301	14.8578
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.228400	67.0264
Argentina	Peso	0.281441	0.345722	18.8640
Brazil	Real	0.331325	0.407000	22.2075
Denmark	Kroner	0.134406	0.165104	9.0087
India	Rupee	0.018702	0.022973	1.2535
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.214257	0.263193	14.3609
Mexico	New Peso	0.074823	0.091912	5.0151
New Zealand	Dollar	0.582059	0.715001	39.0133
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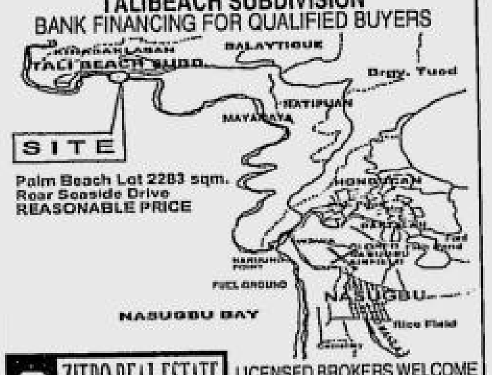

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PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late Manfred Karl Hermann Krause has been the subject of a deed of extrajudicial settlement with waiver by his heirs as per Doc. No. 80, Page No. 17, Book No. CX, Series of 2005 of Notary Public Benjamin L. Rabo of Q.C. (PDI-June 9, 16, 23, 2005)

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Republic of the Philippines
COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS
Manila

EN BANC

IN THE MATTER OF THE CONDUCT OF A MANUAL ELECTION SYSTEM, AND EXTENSION OF FILING OF CERTIFICATES OF CANDIDACY FOR ALL POSITIONS IN CONNECTION WITH THE AUGUST 8, 2005 ELECTIONS IN THE AUTONOMOUS REGION IN MUSLIM MINDANAO
x-----------------------------x

BENJAMIN S. ABALOS	Chairman
RUFINO S.B. JAVIER	Commissioner
MEHOL K. SADAIN	Commissioner
RESURRECCION Z. BORRA	Commissioner
FLORENTINO A. TUASON, JR.	Commissioner
VIRGILIO O. GARCILLANO	Commissioner
MANUEL A. BARCELONA, JR.	Commissioner

Promulgated: 7 June 2005

RESOLUTION NO. 7506

WHEREAS, in line with Republic Act No. 8436, mandating the automation of elections from 1998 and beyond, the Commission on Elections, prepared for the automation of the August 8, 2005 ARMM elections, and has filed on December 9, 2004, a motion before the Supreme Court, requesting for authority to use the automated counting machines in connection with said elections;

WHEREAS, to date the aforesaid motion has remained unacted upon by the Supreme Court;

WHEREAS, with barely two (2) months to go before the said political exercise, the Commission is placed in a tight predicament considering the numerous activities yet to be finalized;

WHEREAS, despite the preparations made by the Commission for the automation of the ARMM elections, the Project Implementation Management Team for the Automated Counting and Canvassing Project, in view of the attendant asks involved due to the short period of time to finalize the preparatory activities, has recommended to revert to the manual election system for the August 8, 2005 ARMM Elections;

WHEREAS, in view of the reversion to the manual election system, the Commission is mandated to comply with the provisions of the law applicable to manual system of election, namely, Republic Act No. 7166, more particularly on the period for filing of certificates of candidacy and commencement of the campaign period;

NOW THEREFORE, the Commission on Elections, by virtue of the powers vested in it by the Constitution, Republic Act No. 7166 and other election laws, hereby **RESOLVED**, as it hereby **RESOLVES**, that;

1. A manual system of election shall be adopted in connection with the August 8, 2005 elections in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao;
2. The deadline for the filing of certificates of candidacy for all positions is extended up to June 23, 2005, in accordance with Section 7 of Republic Act No. 7166;
3. The start of the campaign period for all positions shall start on June 24, 2005, pursuant to Section 5 of Republic No. 7166.

The Executive Director shall cause the widest dissemination of this resolution, furnishing copies thereof to the Regional Election Director of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) who shall, likewise disseminate the same to all field offices of said region for their information and appropriate action and, the Education and Information Department to cause the publication hereof in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

SO ORDERED.

BENJAMIN S. ABALOS
Chairman

RUFINO S. B. JAVIER
Commissioner

MEHOL K. SADAIN
Commissioner

RESURRECCION Z. BORRA
Commissioner

FLORENTINO A. TUASON, JR.
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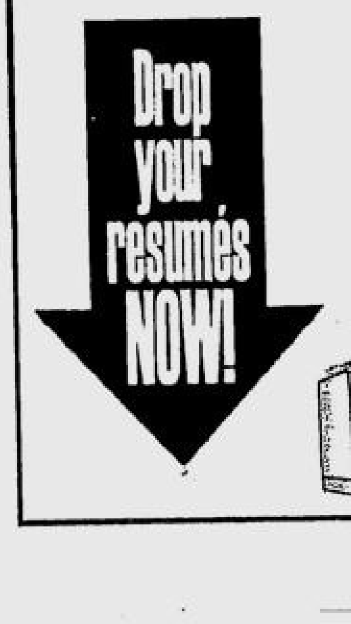
Commissioner

MANUEL A. BARCELONA, JR.
Commissioner

(PDI – June 9, 2005)



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SENATE
Pasay City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Senate of the Philippines invites all G-EPS registered bidders/suppliers to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following:

ITEM/DESCRIPTION	ESTIMATED COST	PRICE OF BID DOCS (Non-refundable)
70 units Desktop Computers, US brand 30 units Laser Printers 70 units Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS), US brand, 500VA/300W	Php 2,870,000 Php 420,000 Php 175,000	Php 100.00

The bid documents shall be available to interested contractors at the BAC Secretariat Office, 4/F Senate of the Philippines, GSIS Building, Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City starting June 8, 2005 upon payment of a non-refundable fee as indicated above. Also, bid bulletins on the schedules of the pre-bidding, submission and opening of bids and other information will be sent through fax.

All particulars relative to the eligibility , bid evaluation, and award of contract shall be governed by the provisions of R.A. 9184 otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act.

This Invitation is also advertised with the Government Electronic Procurement System (G-EPS) at www.procurementservice.org.

For more information, please call the BAC Secretariat Office at telefax no. 552-6601 local 1602 (c/o Rose de Castro or Jo Costo).

THE SENATE OF THE PHILIPPINES RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REVIEW ALL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS, REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, WAIVE ANY DEFECTS CONTAINED THEREIN AND ACCEPT THE OFFER MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE GOVERNMENT, AND THE RIGHT TO CONFISCATE THE BID BOND AND/OR PURSUE APPROPRIATE LEGAL ACTION SHOULD THE WINNING BIDDER REFUSE TO ACCEPT THE AWARD.

FURTHER, THE SENATE OF THE PHILIPPINES ASSUMES NO OBLIGATION WHATSOEVER TO COMPENSATE OR INDEMNIFY THE BIDDER FOR ANY EXPENSE OR LOSS THAT THEY MAY INCUR IN PARTICIPATING IN THIS UNDERTAKING NOR DOES IT GUARANTEE THAT AN AWARD WILL BE MADE.

(Sgd.) **ATTY. ARNEL JOSE S. BAÑAS**
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI--June 8 & 9, 2005)

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP), through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites suppliers/manufacturers/distributors/contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

ITB No.	Item / Description	Approved Budget	Source of Funds
2005-156	1 unit SSL/VPN NETWORK EQUIPMENT (Secure Socket Layer/Virtual Private Network) Inclusive of: • 500 concurrent User Licence • Desktop Adapter, 10 pack • Host Adapter • 24 hrs./7 days a week support for one year for parts and labor • SSL/VPN Network Equipment is an IT solution that provides secured remote access for employees, business partners and customers	P 4,500,000.00	LBP Funds

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last two (2) years with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

Bidding of the above requirements is scheduled on **June 29, 2005 at 1:00 p.m.** and the Bid documents may be obtained from the Procurement Division of the General Services Department, 25th Floor, LANDBANK Plaza, M. H. del Pilar corner Dr. Quintos Streets, Malate, Manila, **upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P1,000.00.**

Interested suppliers are requested to attend the Pre-Bid Conference scheduled on **June 16, 2005** at the 25th Floor, Conference Room, LANDBANK Plaza, Malate, Manila.

All particulars relative to **Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post Qualification and Award of Contract** shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of **RA 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).**

LANDBANK reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to declare the bidding a failure or waive any required formality therein and to make an award to the bidder whose bid is most advantageous to the Bank.

COMMITTEE ON BIDS AND AWARDS

(PDI – June 2 & 9, 2005)

NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION
Diliman, Quezon City

INVITATION TO BID FOR THE SALE SCRAP/JUNK ITEMS

"AS IS, WHERE IS" BASIS

DATE OF BIDDING : June 29, 2005, 2:00 p.m., Solarium Hall, Bldg.-1 Grd. Floor, NPC-HO, Agham Road corner Quezon Ave., Diliman, Quezon City.

The National Power Corporation will conduct public bidding of the following scrap and junk items located at various NPC and TRANSCO stations.

SCHEDULE-I

Item Description and Location	Minimum Bid Price
1. One (1) lot of scrap metal consisting of junk heavy equipment, motor vehicles, steel tower parts, guy wires, and other junk items located at Santiago and Bayombong Substations.	P 1,050,300.00/lot
2. One (1) lot junk substation equipment and materials located at Cabanatuan Substation, Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija	P 249,000.00/lot
3. One (1) lot of unserviceable and junk GPE items located at TRANSCO's Biñan Substation	P 122,500.00/lot

SCHEDULE-II

Item Description and Location	Minimum Bid Price
1. One (1) lot of junk substation equipment and transmission line materials consisting of guy wires, aluminum OHGW, post and suspension insulators, current transformers, GI sheets, steel tower parts, junk Willy's Jeep and other junk items located at Kalayaan Warehouse, Kalayaan, Laguna	P 700,000.00/lot

ALL BIDS MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH THE FOLLOWING:

1 PROPOSAL BOND DEPOSIT IN THE FORM OF CASH OR MANAGER'S/CASHIER'S CHECK EQUIVALENT TO TEN PERCENT (10%) OF THE TOTAL BID PRICE OFFER.
2. LATEST INCOME TAX RETURN (2004 ORIGINAL OR XEROX COPY) OF THE BIDDER OR AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENT (ORIGINAL) OF THE COMPANY AND ONE (1) COPY OF VALID IDENTIFICATION CARD LIKE DRIVER'S LICENSE, GSIS IS, SSS ID, POSTAL ID, PASSPORT, PRC ID AND COMPANY ID.

Interested parties who wish to participate in the public bidding may secure the bid form at P500.00/set from Mr. Alfonso D. Alday, Manager, Warehousing Inventory, Traffic and Asset Disposal Division (WITADD) at Bldg. 1, Ground Floor, NPC Head Office, Corner Agham Road and Quezon Ave., Diliman, Q.C. or call telephone no 922-8431. **Deadline for issuance of bid form is 4:00 p.m. June 28, 2005.**

For the Materials Management Department

(Sgd.) FELIX B. TACATA, JR.
OIC, MMD

(PDI - June 8, 9 & 10, 2005)

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INVITATION TO PRE-QUALIFY AND BID

Local Enhancement and Development (LEAD) for Health Project

Management Sciences for Health, Inc. (MSH) is a contractor funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) tasked to implement the LEAD for Health Project. The LEAD for Health project is a three year project that aims to strengthen local government provision and management of family planning and selected health services (TB, HIV-AIDS and Vitamin A supplementation) and improve the policies and financing for these services. The project will seek to improve the capacity of the local government units (LGUs) in the Philippines, particularly in cities and municipalities, to meet the needs of their constituents, especially the poor, for family planning, TB and other selected health services. The project will accomplish these goals by (a) strengthening the financial, managerial and technical capacity of LGUs to deliver FP, TB and other selected health services, and developing local level support to deliver these services; and (b) improving the policy and legislative framework at both the national and local levels to finance and support these program. Provision of technical assistance will help the LGUs develop commitment to and ownership of the project.

MSH invites local organizations to submit Expressions of Interest (EOI) for the provision of technical services for the project in its coverage areas all over the country. Interested organizations must provide information such as company profile, brochure, description/experience of similar assignments, description of geographic networks within the country (detailing regional, provincial and/or municipal experiences), availability of appropriate skills among staff, etc. EOIs must be in writing and delivered to the address indicated below no later than 16 June 2005.

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Suite 1101 Ma. Natividad Building
470 T.M. Kalaw corner Cortada Streets, Ermita, Manila
Tel. No. (02) 526-3877
Fax. No. (02) 521-0227
Email: rgaffud@lead.org.ph

All EOIs shall be evaluated by MSH and only qualified organizations shall be invited for a pre-bid conference scheduled on a later date. Pre-qualified organizations shall be provided with bidding documents. The pre-bid conference shall be convened to discuss the details and questions regarding the bid documents.

MSH reserves the right to reject any or all Application for Pre-qualification, waive any required formality therein, and accept the bid and award the subcontract to the most advantageous offer to the project. MSH assumes no responsibility to compensate or indemnify the bidder for any expense or loss that may be incurred for the preparation of the bids, nor does it guarantee an award will be made.

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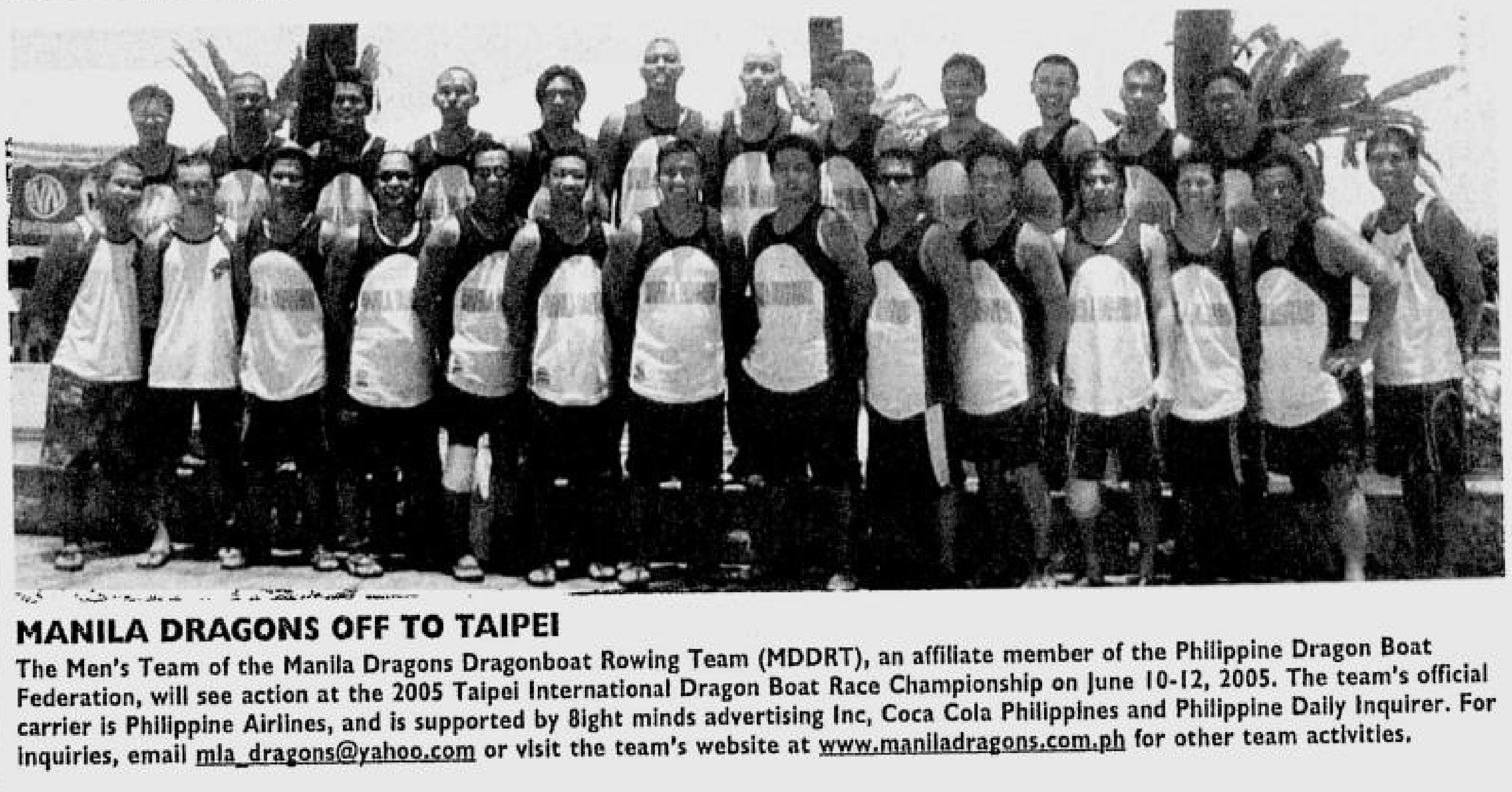

MANILA DRAGONS OFF TO TAIPEI
The Men's Team of the Manila Dragons Dragonboat Rowing Team (MDDRT), an affiliate member of the Philippine Dragon Boat Federation, will see action at the 2005 Taipei International Dragon Boat Race Championship on June 10-12, 2005. The team's official carrier is Philippine Airlines, and is supported by 8ight minds advertising Inc, Coca Cola Philippines and Philippine Daily Inquirer. For inquiries, email mla_dragons@yahoo.com or visit the team's website at www.maniladragons.com.ph for other team activities.

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MESSAGE OF THANKS
DEATH ANNIVERSARY
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"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

John 3:16

We, the bereaved family of the late

Dr. Rolan Castelo Esteban (Ph.D.)

August 4, 1934 – May 1, 2005

Wish to extend our heartfelt gratitude to one and all

Whose presence and touch of concern were so comforting; whose expressions of sympathies in various endearing ways have lightened our grief, and whose blessings, prayers and masses have carried him through his final journey.

Let us remember him from one highly regarded quotation from an unknown author.

"When we get to the place where there is nothing left but God, we find that God is all we need. Keep your faith in our trustworthy God."

Maraming Salamat Po!

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall live in the house of the Lord forever" – **Psalm 23:6**

Atty. Euclides (Ed) A. Abcede

of Mauban, Quezon and Lucena City

Peacefully joined our Lord and his beloved wife Pat Carlos (†) at the age of 66.

His bereaved children, **Learned** and **Rhaetia (Sunshine)**; daughter-in-law **Gloidee**; grandchildren **Kyle** and **Kobi**; brothers and sisters and their spouses **Dennis** and **Dulce**, **Zayda** and **Tony**, **Isidro Jr.** and **Mayette**, and **Thelma** and **George**; in-laws and relatives request your prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at 1152 Kamagong St., Employees Village, Lucena City.

Interment will be on Saturday, June 11, 2005 at the Lucena Memorial Park after the Holy Mass at St. Ferdinand Cathedral, Lucena City at 2:00 p.m.

Teresita C. Guevara
and
Amanda Guevara Lorenzo

returned to their Creator

on June 4, 2005

Atty. **Ramon M. Guevara, Mandy's** parents, **Marvin B. Lorenzo** and **Margarita Laura C. Guevara, Jose Domingo C. Guevara** and their families request a prayer in thanksgiving for the love they brought into their lives and in farewell. They lie in state at Chapel 10, Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue.

Funeral Mass will be on Saturday, June 11, 2005 at 8:00 a.m. prior to cremation.

From the bereaved family of the late

William "Bill" Lupton

July 30, 1940 – May 1, 2005

Our heartfelt thanks for your care, concern and prayers during our difficult moments. Please continue to remember him in your prayers.

MESSAGE OF THANKS

We, the family of the late

MARIA RIVERA GUZMAN

who passed away in the grace of our Lord on May 24, 2005

wish to express our heartfelt gratitude and sincerest appreciation to all those who offered masses and prayers, gave donations, sent flowers and messages of sympathy and who, in countless ways, condoled with and comforted us in our hour of bereavement.

We design OBITUARIES for free.

Manila Doctors' Hospital

Section of Gastroenterology and Digestive Endoscopy

Condoles with the family of

Gonzalo F. Austria, M.D.

(1907 – 2005)

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." **Romans 8:38-39**

Papa Alex ... you will always be fondly remembered in our hearts.

ALEJANDRO F. UNSON, JR.

Holy Masses will be offered in his memory on **Friday, June 10, 2005** on his **2nd Death Anniversary** at the following churches:

SANTUARIO DE SAN ANTONIO *Forbes Park, Makati City*	6:15 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.
ST. JOHN BOSCO PARISH *Arnaiz, Makati City*	6:30 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.
STO. NIÑO DE LA PAZ COMMUNITY *Greenbelt Chapel, Makati*	7:15 a.m. & 5:15 p.m.
PARISH OF OUR LADY OF THE ABANDONED *Sta. Ana, Manila*	6:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.
ST. ANDREWS PARISH CHURCH *Kalayaan St., Makati City*	6:00 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.
NATIONAL SHRINE OF THE SACRED HEART *Dao St., SAV, Makati City*	6:00 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.
MALATE CHURCH *2000 M. H. Del Pilar, Malate, Manila*	6:00 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.
CHRIST THE KING DIVINE WORD MISSION SEMINARY *E. Rodriguez Sr., Blvd., Q.C.*	6:00 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.
MT. CARMEL SHRINE *Doña Juana Rodriguez Ave., New Manila, Q.C.*	6:00 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.
ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE PARISH *Cor. Mother Ignacia St., Timog, Q.C.*	6:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.
SACRED HEART PARISH *Sct. Ybardolaza, Kamuning, Q.C.*	6:00 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.

We thank everyone who continue to keep him in their prayers and attend masses for the eternal repose of his soul.

VIRGINIA TAMASE DACQUEL

of Cuyapo, Nueva Ecija & Los Angeles, California

Peacefully joined our Lord at the age of 83.

Loving and beloved mother of **Glenn** (†), **Aniline & Gerry Stilgenbauer** and **Fidel, Jr. & Rosavilla Teñoso**; grandmother of **Glenn & Tracy Stilgenbauer, Francia & Michael Nitro, Rosalyn & Michael Victoria, Jay-R & Ophalyn Vejerano, Ma. Socorro & Happy**; great grandmother of **Marc Michael & Micaela Nitro** and **Nicole Victoria**.

Her family, nephews & nieces & other relatives and friends request pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains will be interred in Holy Cross Cemetery and Mausoleum in Culver City, California on Friday, June 10, 2005.

ENGR. RICARDO C. CRUZ

Former Director, Philippine Textile Research Institute

Joined the Creator on June 6, 2005, at the age of 90.

He is survived by children **Isagani** and **Medy, Lilia** and **Virgilio Lagade** and **Loree** and **James Mante**; and grandchildren **Emily, Luna, Grachi, Nikko, JL, Samric, Kiril, Nikos** and **Winnie**.

Necrological services will be held on June 10, 2005 at 8 p.m. at the National City United Church, 96 Times St., West Triangle Homes, Quezon City. Interment will be at Loyola Memorial Park, Parañaque on Saturday, June 11, 2005 at 3 p.m.

Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Matthew 10:39

Luisa A. Raposa

has bid the world goodbye to meet our Creator and her beloved husband ***Enrique Raposa Sr.*** *on June 7, 2005 at the age of 78.*

Her children **Earl, Marilyn, Enrique Jr.** and **Gil Dennis**; grandchildren **Ma. Theresa, Janet May, Paul Michael, Mary Jocelyn, Zarah Mae, Adeline Gay, Enrique III, Mary Lou**; son and daughters-in-law **Ramon, Lourdes** and **Emerita** send her off to the heavens where she could continue serving the Lord in person.

Her remains lie in state at the Holy Family Chapel Cruzada, Legazpi City.

Interment will be on Friday, June 10, 2005 at the Pristine Memorial Gardens, Bonot, Legazpi City after the 2 p.m. Mass at the Holy Family Chapel.

SMC to buy up all shares of National Foods

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SOUTHEAST Asia's largest food and beverage firm San Miguel Corp. (SMC) will buy up all the fully paid ordinary shares of National Foods Ltd., after the Philippine firm secured 90.13 percent of the Australian company.

In a disclosure filed with the Australian Stock Exchange, SMC said that it would proceed with its "compulsory acquisition" of National Foods under the terms of their "bidders' statement."

Sources said that the "compulsory acquisition" is not a tender offer. It is an acquisition process whereby a bidder with more than 90 percent of the stock in a target company has the right to buy out the remaining shareholders at the bid price of A$6.40 a share. The remaining shareholders must sell once the compulsory acquisition process is initiated.

SMC said it would not extend its offer period which would close on June 10 at 7 p.m.

Shareholders who accept the offer will be paid A$6.40 a share within 21 days after their acceptance is processed.

National Foods is SMC's largest acquisition this year valued at roughly A$1.9 billion (US$1.5 billion).

SMC has secured bridge financing or loans from a consortium of banks worth US$1.1 billion.

National Foods earlier urged its shareholders to accept SMC's A$1.9-billion offer. New Zealand's largest dairy exporter, Fonterra Cooperative Group, also agreed to sell its 19 percent stake in National Foods to SMC.

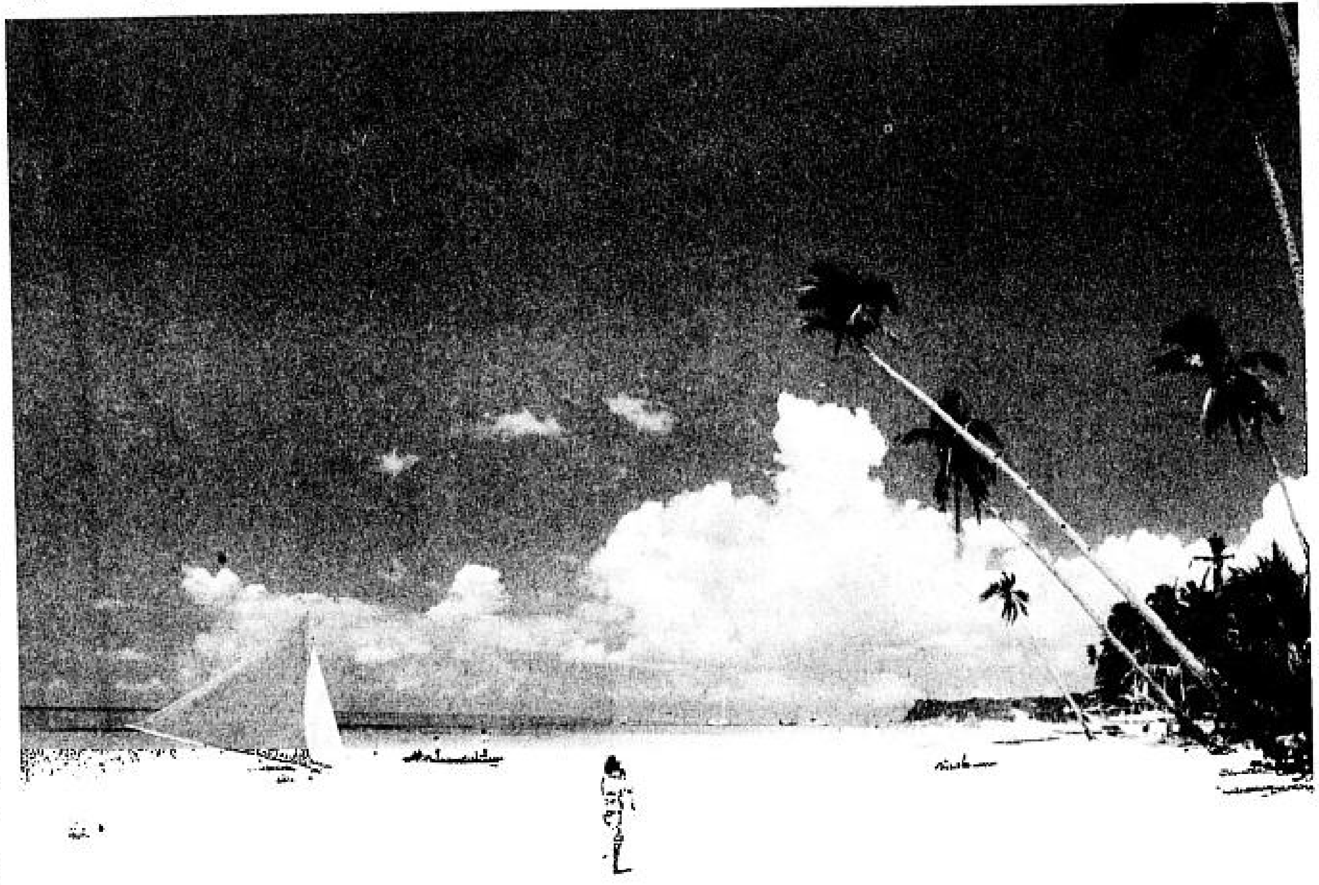
"We look forward to completing this acquisition over the next few weeks," SMC president Ramon Ang had said. "National Foods is an excellent business, having consistently delivered strong earnings and growth in the internationally competitive Australian dairy sector. We consider Australia an important strategic operating base from which to expand into the Asia-Pacific region."

According to Ang, once SMC has completed its acquisition of National Foods, it will study an option to form a holding company where it can sell "some shares" of national Foods to other investors.

Ang said this would allow SMC to shell out less cash for its bid.

WB subsidiary explores Boracay's trade potentials

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau



THE SAND and the sea are not the only things the IFC sees in Boracay. It also glimpses investment potentials with huge payoffs for private investors.

BORACAY ISLAND, Aklan—The International Finance Corp. (IFC), the largest multilateral source of loan and equity financing for private sector projects in the developing world and a subsidiary of the World Bank, wants to explore investment opportunities on Boracay Island.

A 14-member team composed of Filipino and German experts are on the island from June 2 until June 11 to conduct consultations and gather data for the IFC.

The team members are also consulting with officials of the tourism and environment departments and members of the Boracay Eminent Persons Group, an advisory body headed by businessman Iñigo Zobel. The body was formed by President Macapagal-Arroyo to map out the sustainable development of Boracay.

Established in 1956, the IFC promotes sustainable private sector development in developing countries by financing projects and assisting private companies acquire financing in international markets. It also provides advice and technical assistance to businesses and governments.

Winfriet Weirner, head of the German team from the Bavarian-based company Obermeyer Planning and Consultancy company, said members of the team would conduct studies and interviews on all stakeholders.

The team members—engineers, architects and experts in tourism, marketing, environment and sanitation, traffic and investment—would identify possible problems and solutions that would be useful for prospective private investors.

Former Tourism Secretary Mina Gabor, head of the Philippine team, said this was the first time that the IFC was conducting a tourism-focused project in the Philippines.

She said the Boracay project would yield a comprehensive assessment of the island's situation, identifying investment opportunities that would bring about sustainable tourism on the island.

Gabor said the IFC was "excited" to look at opportunities in Boracay because of the booming tourism industry.

Orlando Sacay, vice president of the Boracay Foundation Inc., a group of resort owners on the island, said the IFC project was "an excellent opportunity, not only for Boracay, but also for coming up with a model of sustainable development."

A final report of the study will be presented to the IFC in August or September.

Gabor pointed out that the final report could serve as a template for island-resorts in the Philippines in meeting international standards for sustainable tourism.

Investments continued to pour in on the island as tourist arrivals reached 428,755 last year, 26.31 percent higher than in 2003.

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Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

MONDAY ARTS & BOOKS ● TUESDAY FITNESS ● WEDNESDAY 2BU ● THURSDAY FOOD ● FRIDAY FASHION & BEAUTY

This week KR obliges readers with recipes for bouillabaisse and clam chowder, plus where to find a food photographer

FOOD PHOTOS BY ERNIE RUBIA

Picture perfect

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

DO YOU know anyone who takes nice close-ups? I am opening my restaurant soon and want to have a picture menu. I have seen the work of others but somehow they all seem like shots I could do! I like our food to look really nice, fresh and appealing. I am opening in July or August. Help!

JAY

Have you tried Chat Pey Poch, Tropicana or Bob's? Seriously, I had the chance to work with Ernie Rubia for a Unilever pictorial last week. I chanced upon his portfolio while we were on break and they were pretty good tight shots! You could literally pick the food off the photo and eat it! Call 0917-8198309, 7571508 or 5634511. Visit www.e-motion-photography.com. Hey, Jay, good luck to you!

My friend is getting married and I'll be catering. I'd like to prepare bouillabaisse soup. Can you give me the recipe for this?

DINA GUANZON

Sure thing! Bouillabaisse (*booh-yuh-bayz*) is a seafood stew from Provence that is made with fish and shellfish, tomatoes, wine, olive oil, garlic, saffron and herbs, and served with a *rouille* (rust-colored spiced sauce made of chilies, garlic, fresh bread crumbs and olive oil). The variations to this dish are many. The French take their bouillabaisse so seriously that they even signed a charter exacting what constitutes an authentic bouillabaisse. The success of your bouillabaisse will determine the success of your friend's marriage. So cook it right, Dina, so they may live happily ever after!

This recipe is one of the easier, saner and more realistic ones to prepare. If you still find it tedious, make clam chowder instead!

Bouillabaisse

¼ c olive oil
1 c carrots, julienne
1 medium sized fennel, julienne (Santis, Lolita's Farmer's Market, Rustan's, Unimart)
1 leek, julienne
1 rib celery, julienne
1 tsp each of fresh thyme and rosemary
1 bay leaf
1/3 c garlic, peeled and chopped
2 c white wine
1 tbsp tomato paste
½ k red ripe tomatoes or 2 cans canned tomatoes, seeded and roughly chopped
10 fish or clam stock
1 tsp saffron (Terry's, Santis, Rustan's)
Seafood mix—¼ k clams cleaned; ½ k fresh white fish (*lapu-lapu, maya-maya*); ¼ k large shrimps, peeled and veined; ½ k mussels cleaned and scrubbed; ¼ k squid, cleaned; 12 large scallops; 2 small lobster tails (Ideally, it must contain all the above, however, you may opt for a mix of at least four types; fish must always be included)
¼ c Pernod-Anise Liquor (Terrys' Santis or Ralph's) or 1/3 c fennel fronds (of fennel bulb)

In a pan, heat olive oil, add vegetables, herbs and garlic. Cook vegetables until tender.

Add wine, tomato paste, tomatoes, stock and saffron.

Simmer over low heat for 15 minutes.

Add seafood one at a time, allowing each to cook before the addition of the next.

Add Pernod or fronds; let simmer over very low heat for 10 minutes.

Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Ladle stew over garlic toast. Serve with *rouille* and garnish with chopped flash leaf parsley.

Garlic Toast

12 slices French bread, ½-inch thick
1 garlic clove
¼ c olive oil

Rub bread with garlic. Brush with olive oil. Toast.

Rouille

2 tbsp garlic
1 red bell pepper, roasted, seeded and chopped
1 tsp chili or pepper flakes
1 c French bread, cubed, crust removed

PICTURE/ C3

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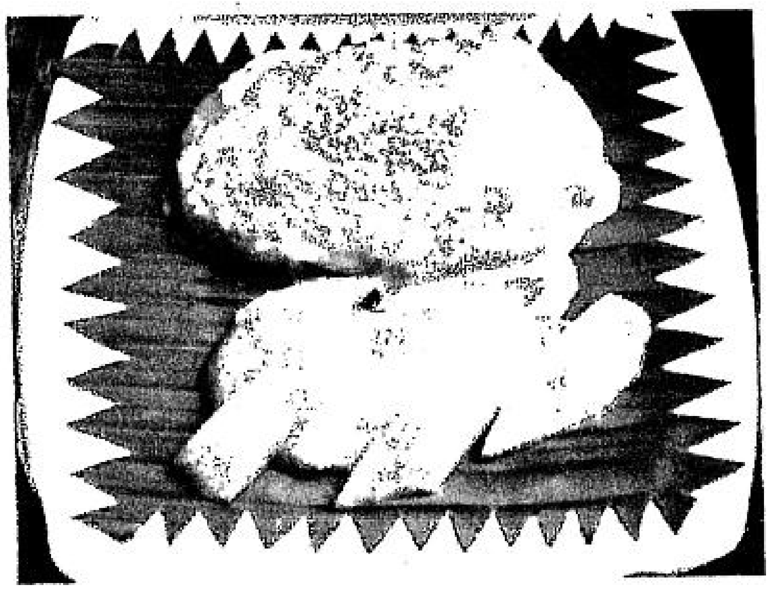
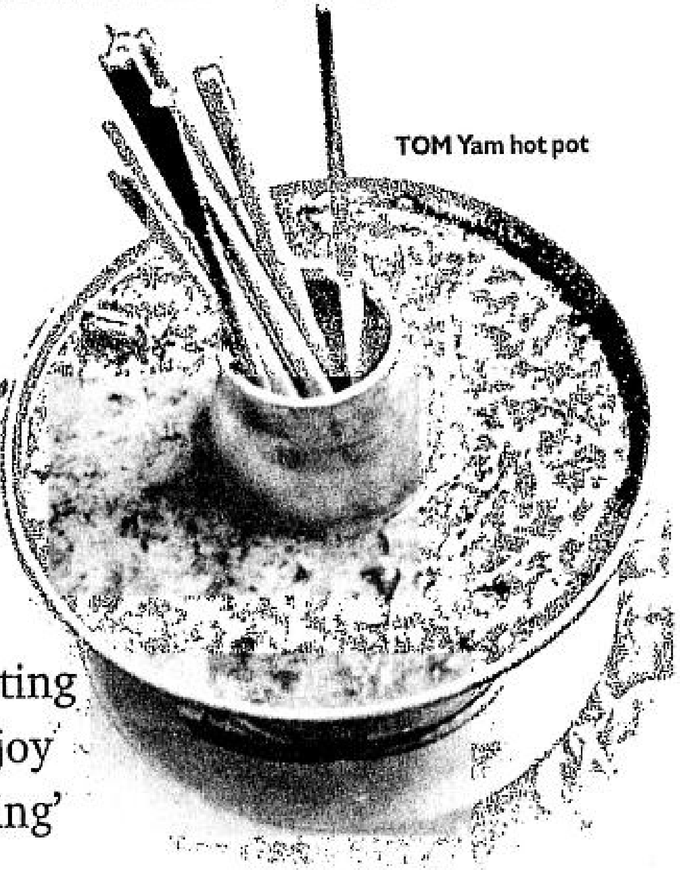
PAPAYA Salad with Prawns

CHICKEN Pandan



MANGO Sticky Rice

How real Thai food is done



TOM Yam hot pot

Text by Alex Y. Vergara
Photos by Chito Vecina

Bangkok Global only wanted visiting executives to enjoy real 'home cooking' in Manila

A CAR-PARTS company based in Bangkok had wanted visiting executives to savor authentic Thai cuisine while in Manila so they decided to branch out into the restaurant business late last year.

Now Siam Taste (third level of the Festival Mall in Alabang) has opened its doors to everyone, providing Thai and foreigner alike an ideal but affordable "fast casual" dining experience.

"People from Bangkok Global used to come to Manila every month," says Tony Siri, managing director of Arroy Global. "Many of them found it very hard to find an affordable and accessible restaurant serving real Thai food."

Arroy Global is a new company formed by Bangkok Global to run its food business. Depending on the public's response, the company plans to open at least 10 Siam Taste outlets in the Philippines within the next two to three years.

Siri, also a Thai, understands his compatriots' dilemma very well. While a handful of Thai restaurants, particularly those in five-star hotels, serve the genuine article, they also charge an arm and a leg for it.

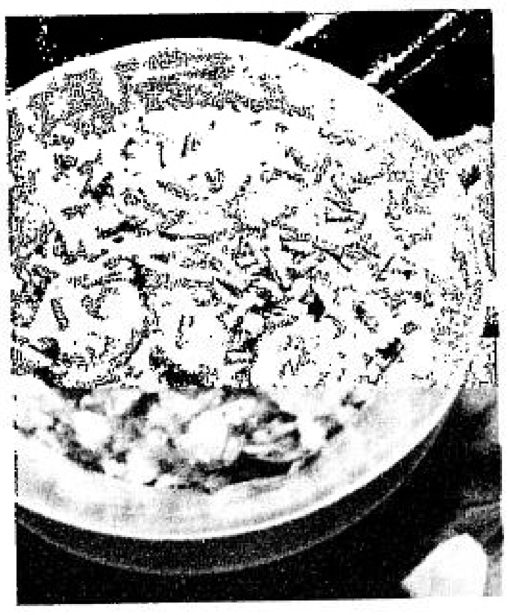
The more affordable and accessible alternatives were wanting in authenticity as well as presentation.

"Not that their dishes taste bad," he clarifies. "It's just that most of what they cook don't taste like the real thing."

The Tom Yam Kung, a hot soup consisting of shrimps and mushrooms, and flavored with such spices as lemongrass, *galingale* roots and kaffir lime leaves, which is popular among Filipinos, is a classic example.

While many Thai restaurants, he says, start on the right note by hiring seasoned Thai chefs, these same restaurants soon begin to cut corners by sending their original chefs home and hiring Filipino cooks to take their place.

Despite the training they get from their Thai counterparts, very few Filipinos are able to capture the delicate flavors and nuances associated with "royal" Thai cooking. He may not be a cook, but Siri certainly knows Thai food.



SEAFOOD Fried Rice

"That's why it's not uncommon for Tom Yam to taste like *sinigang*," he says. "I love *sinigang*, but it's supposed to taste different from Tom Yam."

The huge popularity of Thai cuisine has made it possible even for Thai foodies to know the difference between authentic Thai cooking and a watered-down or Filipinized version. Thai food, says Siri, now ranks third behind Chinese and Italian dishes in terms of global popularity and acceptance. We wonder what the proud French would say.

"According to a recent study Thai restaurateurs did, 40 percent of (non-Thais) surveyed know what Thai food is," he says.

Thai dishes also appeal to health buffs, he adds, because they're neither too oily nor too salty. Unlike other cuisine, Thai cooking derives its flavors primarily from fresh herbs and spices. In the Philippines, many of the ingredients are imported from Thailand.

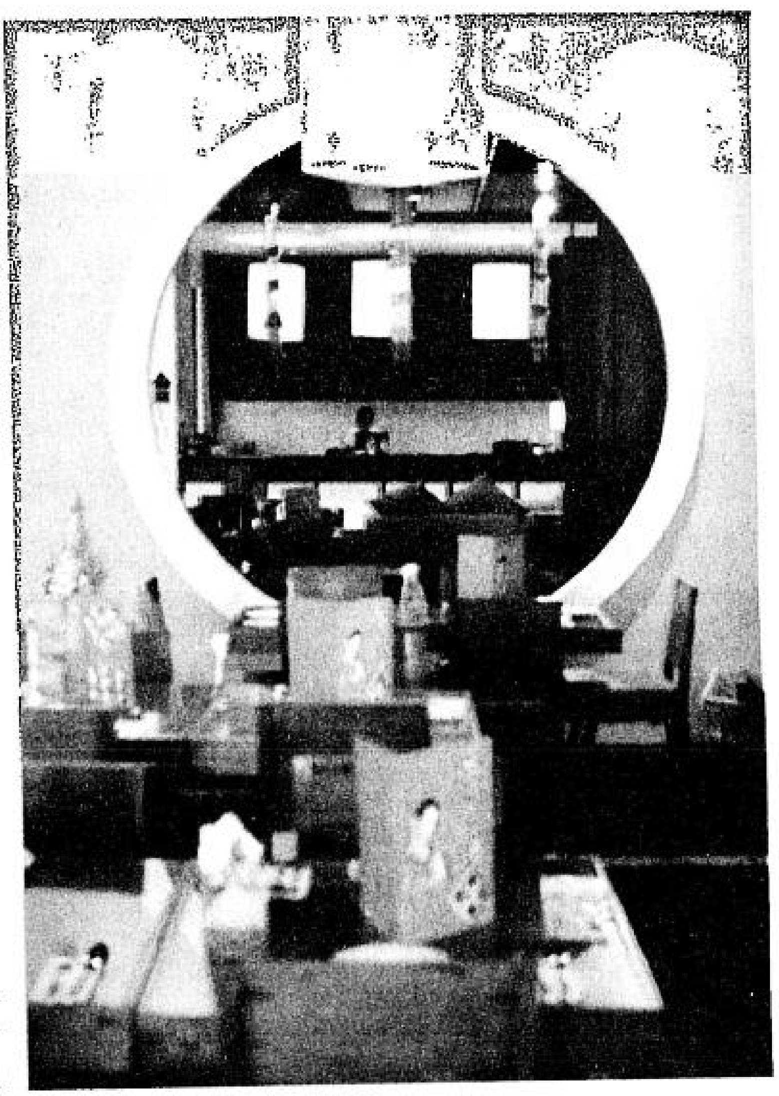
Authentic Thai food is also unique since even the most seasoned cook will have a hard time unraveling the secrets behind it.

"It takes years of practice to cook Thai food the right way," says Siri. "That's why we hired two Thai chefs to do our dishes. In order to maintain consistency of our sauces, we also have a commissary. We're very strict when it comes to quality control."

He also wishes to debunk the misconception that Thai food is too hot for most Filipino palates to handle. Although there are quite a number of Thai dishes on the menu that are particularly spicy, most of the items such as Chicken Pandan, Siam Pork Satey, Chicken Cashew Nut and Siam Spare Ribs, to name a few, are free of chili and other fiery ingredients.

So as not to "frighten" customers, Siam Taste rates the spiciness of dishes on its menu with flower icons instead of the more popular chili symbol—one being the mildest and three the spiciest. Majority of the dishes don't even have any icon.

"Of the 100 or so items we have on the menu," says Siri, "only 20 percent are spicy."



NON-TRADITIONAL interiors at Siam Taste's Festival Mall outlet

TONY Siri, managing director of Arroy Global

Siri has nothing against fast food. In fact, before Arroy Global opened Siam Taste, the company sort of tested the waters by first opening Siam Express. The Thai food on wheels has two outlets, one at GT Tower in Makati and the other at the Festival Mall's food court.

But if you go for authentic Thai cooking, he says, then you need more time on the table to truly savor the real thing. Thai food, after all, took hundreds of years under strict royal supervision to develop and fine tune.

E-mail the author at avergara@inquirer.com.ph.

'Last-man standing' is a woman

MA. Cristina "Tina" Mata, a 29-year-old medical representative, won a brand-new, fully paid and tax-free Honda City car in Tokyo Tokyo's "Auto Ko 'To: The Last-Man-Standing Car Challenge" at the SM Megamall Open Parking C recently.

A total of 42 challengers—35 men and seven women—participated in the event, a test of physical endurance. The challengers had to keep their right hand (palm and fingers) flat on a car for 28 hours. The one who managed to keep his/her hand on the car the longest won.

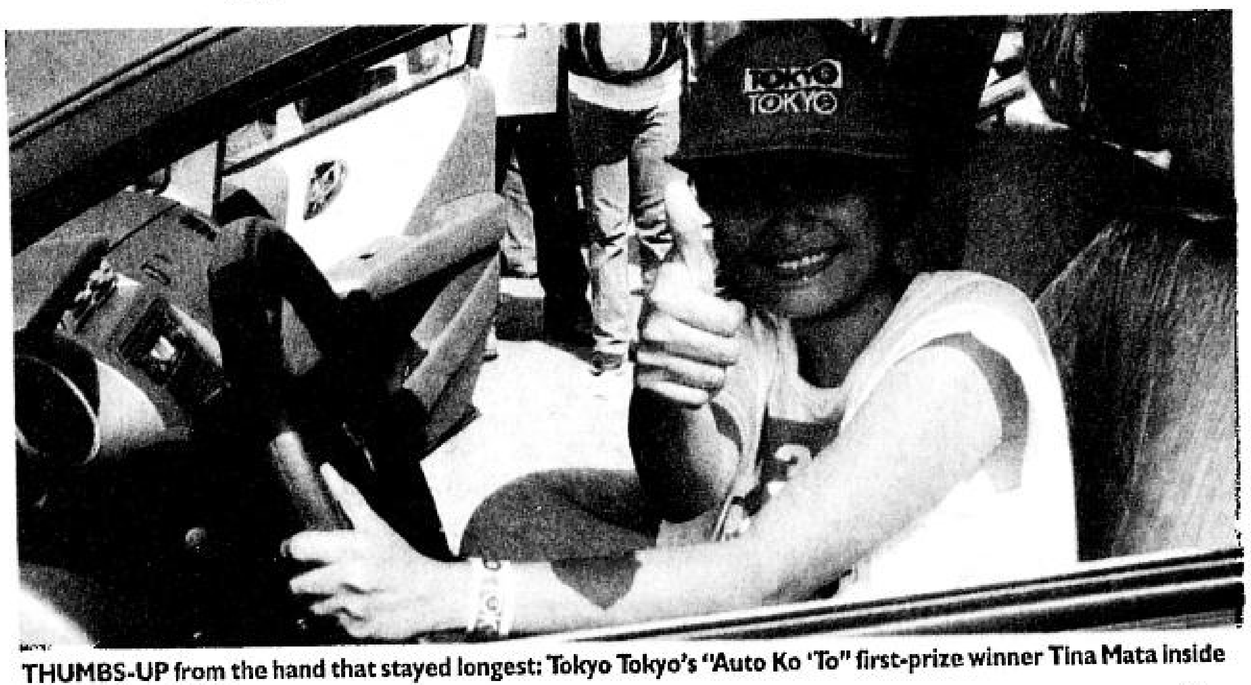
The event was sponsored by Pepsi, Diadora, Timex and Honda, with media partners 89.9 DWTM, 94.7 DWLL Mellow Touch and DWRT 99.5. Hosts were television personalities Franco Mabanta and DWRT DJs Joe Schmoe and DaBlobb. Among the celebrities who graced the event were Gabriel Valenciano and commercial model Micah Muñoz; singer Dulce and her family, and singer/stage actress Lana Jalosjos.

Second-placer Derie Alangilan won P5,000 in cash, a Timex watch, and gift certificates from Tokyo Tokyo and Gift Gate. Third-prize winner Marky Rodil received a Timex watch and gift certificates from Tokyo Tokyo and Gift Gate.

To compete, challengers completed Tokyo Tokyo's 20th Anniversary "Nakarami" Card with five stamps (every P200 purchase earned one stamp) and passed a physical examination.

John Amante, managing director of the Japanese fast-food chain, said that while Tokyo Tokyo wanted to do something special for its 20th anniversary, they didn't want just the usual raffle. The challenge allowed participants to reveal their personalities and helped spread the idea that people had to work hard to get something they really wanted.

Amante said the success of the event encouraged them to plan another big activity soon, along the same reality-based challenge like "Auto Ko 'To."



THUMBS-UP from the hand that stayed longest: Tokyo Tokyo's "Auto Ko 'To" first-prize winner Tina Mata inside her new Honda City

A culinary artist as nationalist

HER name may not be among the roster of nationalists honored on June 12, Independence Day, but Teresita Reyes, better known as "Mama Sita," has made her own modest contribution in promoting the Philippines, particularly Filipino cuisine.

Coming from the family that set up one of the country's culinary landmarks, the Aristocrat Restaurant, Reyes discovered early on the richness of Filipino native cookery from her mother Engracia, or Aling Asiang, an institution in the Philippine food industry.

Reyes sought to preserve and enhance the distinctive Filipino flavors for future generations and to make it easier for overseas Pinoys to enjoy native dishes wherever they are.

Starting with a single product in the '80s, Reyes has come up with a line of sauces and mixes that brings the flavors of home to Filipinos everywhere.

The Mama Sita line not only provides employment to hundreds of people but the company's use of organic, Philippine-grown ingredients has boosted local production of those products.

Furthermore, Mama Sita's products are proof that Filipino-made products can stand alongside foreign goods and still hold their own.

Here is a Mama Sita original recipe of a favorite Filipino dish:

WHEN she was alive, Teresita "Mama Sita" Reyes (standing) delighted family and friends with special dishes she would prepare for them, , especially her mother Engracia "Aling Asiang" Reyes (left), founder of Aristocrat Restaurant.

Adobong Manok

1 k chicken, cut into serving pieces
1/3 c vinegar, Paombong
2 tbsp garlic, crushed
1 piece bay leaf (laurel)
½ tsp salt
3 tbsp soy sauce
½ tsp black pepper, ground
½ c water

In a casserole, combine chicken, vinegar, 1 tbsp garlic, laurel, salt, soy sauce, black pepper and water. Boil and simmer until tender. Take out chicken from the sauce and set aside. In a wok, sauté the remaining garlic and cook chicken until golden brown. Add the sauce. Cover and simmer until sauce thickens.

Serves four to six.

Breakfast for would-be champions

FORTIFY your child with a more filling and nutritious breakfast for the school day ahead.

Family Recipes Champorado provides energy from carbohydrates derived from whole rice grains and real chocolate from luscious cacao.

Aside from preservative-free *champorado*, the Family Recipes product line also includes *nata de coco* and *kaong*.

Chef Amelia Ann Alba of Barbara's said Family Recipes Champorado was so good she couldn't believe it was off-the-shelf.

Joshua de los Reyes of the Cake Gallery said Family Recipes products were among the few things available in the supermarket that she knew would be good for her kids.

Family Recipes treats may be enjoyed as they are straight out of the pouch. They can also be added to other treats. Manufacturers guarantee no flavor-enhancing chemicals or preservatives are used in the products.

The Family Recipes Champorado comes in a foil retort pouch that can be heated by putting it in a pot of hot water. The *champorado* can also be transferred to a microwave-safe container for heating and be ready to serve in 45 seconds.

Family Recipes products are available at SM, Landmark, all Robinsons outlets, Shopwise, Cash n' Carry and other leading supermarkets. Call 8924206 or 8924207.

Pizza basics with Reggie Aspiras

THE REGGIE Aspiras School of Culinary Arts is offering the following classes:

June 10—Pizza Basics Workshop: Thin, Thick and Stuffed Pasta Dough; Garlic Anchovy, Four Cheeses, Seafood, Italian Sausage and Mixed Meat, Grilled Pesto Vegetables, Over-stuffed Pan Pizza

June 11—Yummy Fried Chicken 2005 (all-new)—Brined, Chili Fried, Chinese Style with Gravy, Delicious Chicken Fried Steak, Five-spice Fried Chicken, Fried Sour Cream Chicken, Honey Fried; side dishes, dessert

June 13—The Ultimate Adobo Class: Learn up to six Adobo recipes from meat to seafood, from classic to contemporary; Flavored Rice to Go with Adobo, Adobo Rice and Acharas

June 15—Traditional and Classic Roasts: Garlic-crusted Roast Beef served with three sauces: Garlic Gravy; Caesar, Sun-dried Tomato and Yorkshire Pudding; Roast Pork with Delicious Corn Bread with Cream Gravy, Apple Calvados, Mango Chutney; Rack of Lamb with Honey Glaze, Mint Chutney and Raisin Peppercorn Sauce

Call 9289296, 9273008, 6335162, 6474744, 0917-8399888.

Culinary journey to France

DINING OUT

MANDARIN Oriental Manila's The Tivoli features "Journees Gastronomiques II: A French Food Festival" until June 19. Special offerings are Warm Duck Foie Gras with apples and balsamic vinegar; Sauteed Squid with celery root remoulade and squid ink emulsion; Shellfish Bisque with avocado and crab; Spicy Crisp Skinned Sea Bass with cilantro sauce; Roasted Monkfish with garlic and vegetable tabouleh; Duckling Breast with confit shallots, carrot mousseline with mint; Lamb, Wild Mushroom and Dried Fruit with spice and olive sauce. Call 7508888.

MAKATI Shangri-La's Shang Palace presents Dragon Boat Festival until June 11. The menu offers Suckling Pig and Barbecued Meats Combination, Sauteed Fresh Scallops and Prawn with Broccoli in XO Sauce, Double-boiled Black Chicken Soup with Shark's Fin Head, Baked Crab in Portuguese Sauce, Fried Udon Noodle with Seafood and Sauteed Diced Beef with Asparagus in Black Pepper Sauce. Inagiku features Awabi Sakamushi, Sushi and Sashimi Moriawase, Tempura Moriawase, Teppan-Yaki Hireniku and Sukiyaki. Call 8138888.

THE WESTIN Philippine Plaza's Café Plaza Too presents "The World is my Oyster" this month. Discover the many ways oysters are prepared by sampling Oysters Kilpatrick, Spiced Asian Oysters and Fried Oysters with Garlic. Call 5515555.

THE SULO Hotel's Patisserie offers Mango Tango Cake for June. It's a fruity flavored cake with white sponge, Continental butter and mango puree. Call 9245051 to 71.

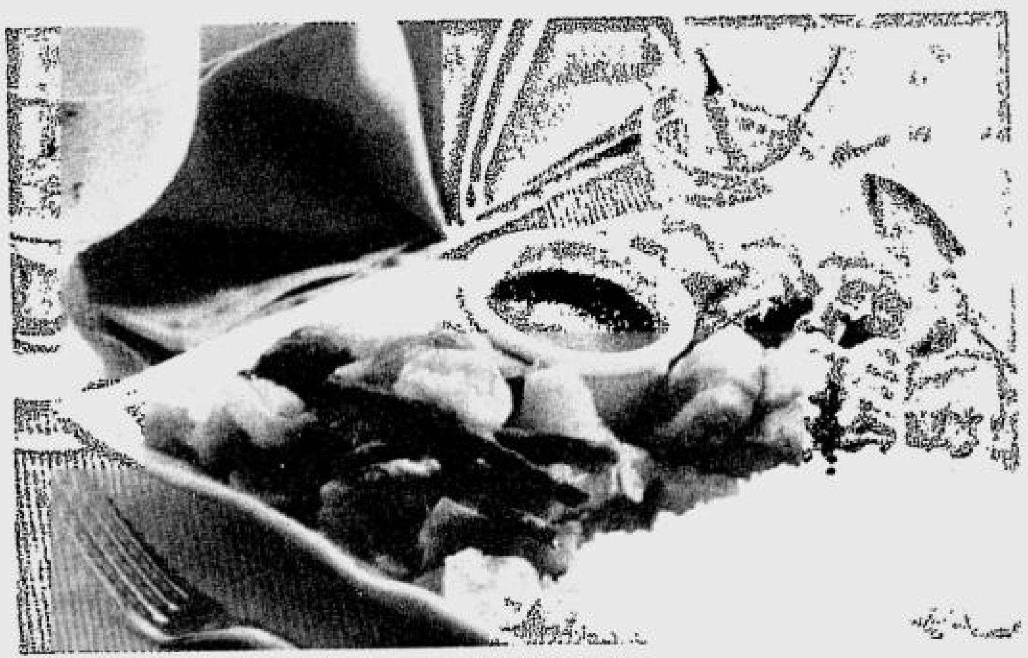
ARISTOCRAT Restaurant in Robinsons Place Manila is featuring four of its best sellers in Barbecue Fest. Barbecue meals like Chicken Barbecue, Pork Barbecue, Boneless Chicken Barbecue and Pork Spareribs Half are served with a free glass of iced tea. Promo is until June 30 at Aristocrat Robinsons Place Manila.

THE RED Crab's Crustasia Crab and Seafood House offers Vietnamese, Thai and Chinese dishes. The menu includes Crab Maritess, Fidel's Pepper Crab, Szechuan Crab, Pooja, Thai Crab Sotanghon, Vietnamese-style Sinigang, Grilled Fish in Banana Leaf with lemon grass, Seafood and Beancurd and Thom Yam. Crustasia is in The Podium and Rockwell Power Plant Mall.

CHUBBY China launches Order-All-You-Can promo. For P250, a diner can order as many entrees as he wants from a selection of 20 dishes. Chubby China is in Greenbelt 1, Makati.

VERDE Island Resort's Comida de Pastor serves Filipino and Asian dishes for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Verde Island Resort is in Subukin, San Antonio, Isla Verde, Batangas City. Call 7500466 or 7500470.

MANILA Diamond Hotel's Yurakuen offers Hiyashi Chuka (cold Japanese noodles with delicious toppings) for June. Matcha (green tea) shake made from Matcha powder is also featured. Call 5283000.



THE LEGEND VILLAS' hotel coffee shop and restaurant Lola Maria presents Businessman's Lunch for June. It includes soup of the day, one entree inclusive of rice or vegetables, dessert and beverage. Dishes include Polynesian Spare Ribs Barbecue, Callos a la Madrileña, Roast Pork Loin with Apple Sauce and Mashed Potatoes and Tempura Moriawasi. The Legend Villas is along Pioneer Street, Mandaluyong. Call 6331501 to 15.

Picture perfect

From page C1

3 tbsp bouillabaisse soup stock
½ c olive oil

Combine ingredients in a blender or processor and pulse; add olive oil in a fine stream to blend and emulsify. Season to taste.

Can you please give me a recipe for delicious clam chowder? I tried this in San Francisco and would really like to make it. Been craving for it ever since.

MARINETTE C.

This is my favorite Clam Chowder recipe! Hope you enjoy it as much as I do!

Clam Chowder

Clam Stock
1 tbsp olive oil
1 onion, chopped
1 tbsp garlic
2 sprigs fresh thyme
1 bay leaf
1 k clams, scrubbed
7 c water

Heat olive oil, add onion, garlic, herbs and clams. Add water and let simmer until clams open up.

Strain reserve stock and clams for chowder.

Chowder
4 tbsp butter
2 tbsp virgin olive oil
1 c bacon (I like using Tyrolian Bacon from Santis)
1 c onion, chopped
2 tbsp garlic cloves, minced
¼ c + 1 tbsp all-purpose flour
Clam stock
1 ½ tsp fresh thyme (makes a difference) or ½ tsp dried
1 c potatoes, peeled and cubed
2 c heavy cream (President, Elle & Vire)
2 tsp Lea and Perrins Worcestershire Sauce, or to taste
2 tsp Tabasco, or to taste
½ c butter
¼ c chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Jacobs Saltine Cracker

Combine butter and olive oil. Add bacon to brown slightly. Add garlic and onions.

Add flour, mix to coat bacon, garlic and onions. Add reserved stock, clams, thyme, potatoes. Let simmer until potatoes are tender

Add cream, season to taste with Worcestershire, Tabasco, salt and pepper.

Let simmer until mixture thickens; add butter.

Serve with Jacobs Saltine Crackers. Garnish with parsley.

For questions and comments, text 0917-8399888.

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Krokodile Grill
Magnum
MyLK
Try Big Buddha's Steamed Fish Fillet with Garlic, Bubba Gump's Old Fashioned New England Clam Chowder, Di Marks' Chicken Croquetas, Good Earth's Beef with Broccoli, Hue's Stuffed Tofu, Krocodile Grill's Deviled Crispy Pata, Magnum's Paella, Masas' Sinigang na Hipon and MyLK's Pork Tenderloin Steaks.
Unilever

WIRELESS GOES WILD

Pldt WeRoam Caught Breaking The Speed Limit

“WHAT’S the best time to get a badminton court? During office hours,” says Bobby, a Cebuano textile manufacturer who handles several branded sportswear lines. “How else can you test if moisture wicking badminton shirts work? You hit the court at midday, in the middle of summer. You literally put the heat on, and play really hard. That’s they way to test how good the product really is,” he says with an intense smile.

“The garment industry today is not what it once was,” says the third generation apparel manufacturer. “It isn’t just about manufacturing anymore. I am doing business differently then my parents who simply had the contracts, and supplied the apparel. My parents lost their shirts, literally, when the sun went down on the textile industry. I learned the hard way that we have to add value in order to stay competitive, especially if other countries in the region have cheaper labor.”

“I needed to be more of a manufacturer to compete. I was watching the Tour De France when I came up with the idea – how comfortable is a rider’s jersey and when they climb a mountain in the middle of summer? How do they test fabrics before using them? I learned they sometimes test in the deserts of Arizona and California, but they are really far from their headquarters, and the costs to operate there are incremental. Some clothing companies spend millions developing simulation centers where they can test for heat. Add to that the additional staff they need just to test for extreme conditions. I already had the contacts from the different brands, and hot weather is free in this country. I bid for a new type of outsource – research and development.”

ACCESS YOUR MARKET AND INFORMATION – ANYTIME, ANYWHERE

Bobby opens his laptop equipped with PLDT WeRoam service. “This is my research and development facility: No walls, no simulators, no hassles. Today, as most days, research and development is being done in the field, or in this case the court. I appointed myself the head of research and development. I know it sounds like an excuse to play, but I am just lucky to have such a job. And I save money paying someone to play for me,” he pauses for a moment smiling, “I mean work. I call this management style the ‘Overhead Smash’. It’s a little corny but the double meaning is more than appropriate – my fixed costs for a new department is my court membership and my laptop. We also test tennis apparel this way. I remain in contact with the office, and give my clients across the world immediate feedback through PLDT WeRoam straight from the court. I can give them details like temperature, and humidity inside the court. I even weigh the clothing before and after the session to see how much moisture the material retains or dissipates, and send the information in real time. Wireless access has created a major revenue generator for me, and I don’t even feel like I wear two hats as president and head of R&D,” he says laughing as if he had the best job in the world.

> “When I am in a hotspot, I can now choose between my GPRS/ EDGE connection or Wi-Fi… I’ll always be in touch, but now it enters a whole new level.”

SPEED ALL YOU WANT

“The court today is setting up Airborne Access Wi-Fi, and is about to become a hotspot. I was psyched when I heard that PLDT WeRoam has just partnered with Airborne Access, giving unlimited Wi-Fi access at all its 144 (and growing) hotspots around the country, all for one flat fee. When I am in a hotspot, I can now choose between my GPRS/ EDGE connection or Wi-Fi. I can go from up to 170 kbps GPRS/EDGE connection from the office to the court, and then switch to Wi-Fi. I’ll always be in touch, but now it enters a whole new level. The thoughts are racing through my head at broadband speed – live video streaming from the court. Not only will my clients see the numbers, but they will see their product put to use on live video. And at that speed, they will think I am at court next door instead of halfway across the world,” he says, almost salivating from the new found speed. “I was doubly excited when I heard that PLDT WeRoam and Airborne Access will introduce this capability with a 3-month free subscription if I sign up within the month of June.”

WIRELESS WORKS FOR YOU

“I already started expansion moves for my R&D department with my existing PLDT WeRoam GPRS/EDGE connection before I heard the news about Airborne Access Wi-Fi partnership. I am pitching my R&D to Europe for the first time. There’s a cycling apparel company based in Paris that I have done shorts for in the past. ‘I want to bid for cycling jerseys, as well as the test contract for them. I’ll probably have to hire someone to test bike jerseys back in Cebu. I don’t think I’ll have the energy for it. It’s a tough niche, because cycling apparel needs to wick moisture, and remain tight even when stretched continuously with a rider’s lung expansion and muscle contraction over long periods. Cebu has the hills and the heat that could replicate tough cycling conditions. My next R&D setup will be a world class facility, even though it consists of a data recorder, a cyclist, a laptop and another PLDT WeRoam Aircard.”

“Besides, badminton is my true love. R&D will still continue for badminton. It isn’t a fad – people playing today will still be playing ten, twenty years from now. And the demand for apparel will also continue with that. You have to remember, badminton is not only a big sport in the Philippines, for it has been big across Asia for decades. The surprising thing is, with the traditional Asian domination of the sport, it still is today one of the fastest growing sports in Asia,” he says with a big smile. “Business in manufacturing and R&D will remain healthy for a long time. And it’s all just another excuse play at work. I love my R&D department which wouldn’t exist without PLDT WeRoam.”

THE BUZZ STOPS HERE

Find out how you can wirelessly access information and your market and in the process increase revenues for your company. The WeRoam Discovery Tent will be setting up in an area near you. If you can’t wait that long to have a PLDT WeRoam and unlimited Wi-Fi through Airborne Access, log on to www.pldtweroam.com or call PLDT Corporate Customer Care at 874-74-74, and see how you can get unhooked and subscribe to the best WeRoam package ever. See how fun it is to live and work in the wireless world.